

Panel Discussion - Add to Cart - Creating an Accessible E-Commerce Experience

[Panel Introduction]

(Lori Litz)

Thank you, Samuel and Fable for providing the audience with actionable items they can use to design an accessible online checkout and a better user experience for their customers. Up next, we'll hear from the panel with their varying perspectives on how to best go about designing and implementing an accessible e-commerce experience. It's sure to be an exciting conversation between Andy, Emma, Federico and Josh, moderated by John.

[Verbit Commercial]

To grow your business and reach more consumers, accessibility should be top of mind. Captioning your marketing and promotional videos and events will help you engage individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, plus everyone who's watching silently. Translating your content into different languages will allow you to spread your message globally. Offering audio descriptions on your videos will also promote your brand effectively to individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Plus, adding transcripts on pages with your marketing videos and audio clips will improve your site SEO, which will help more people discover you. Verbit can help with all of these needs. We're making online business environments more inclusive. Partner with us to grow your presence and allow every person you're targeting to connect with your brand. Verbit. Let's expand your business's reach.

[Fable Commercial]

I am so tired of standards and I don't want you to have to read all the standards in order to understand what you need to do for accessibility.

This course is about accessibility, but accessibility isn't just about people with disabilities. We have differences in how we see, touch and think even here, which means that you and I don't use technology the exact same way, and neither does anybody else.

As someone who is completely blind, a lot of the information in the world is presented entirely visually.

It was a learning curve, both sort of physically and emotionally, socially too. I've been using communication tools for well over 20 years. I'm hearing impaired and I've worn hearing aids in both of my ears since I was six years old. This class is about building the future of digital and creating experiences that work for everyone. We can go beyond standards and we can start

thinking about usability for people with disabilities, and that's what we're going to learn how to make things usable for everyone.

Thank you for being here. Let's dive in.

[\[Accessible E-Commerce Panel Discussion\]](#)

(John Griffin)

Hello, everybody. I'm John Griffin. I'm the Publisher of Accessibility.com. Today we're doing an important piece of work with this broadcast. We're going to talk about e-commerce and how it impacts disabilities. Let me start by going around the chat room and get our guests, distinguished guest panel to introduce themselves.

(Andy Burstein)

My name is Andy Burstein. I am with Accessible Pharmacy Services for the Blind.

We are a home delivery pharmacy and health care company. We specialize in patients who are blind, deaf-blind and have low vision. We're the only provider of its kind. And we're the largest blind-owned health care company in the country. And everything we do is through the lens of merging health care and accessibility. And we're very fortunate. We've only been in business for a few years, but we work with patients in 34 states throughout the country.

And, you know, it's an ongoing learning process to be accessible. And we're excited to be here today to contribute information, but also to learn from the other panelists. And once again, thank you for including me.

(Emma Hardman)

So excited to be here. Thank you for having me. So my name is Emma Hardman, and I've been working in the digital accessibility field for about ten years now. I've been at companies like Expedia, done a lot of consulting work. Most recently worked for a streaming events platform called Hopin. And I've worked in every position in the accessibility field from front end developer fixing, fixing those bugs on the live site to consulting with design to working in the product development lifecycle, to leading an accessibility program and building up those processes that are really important to make sure that we're releasing that accessible experience to the consumers into the live site.

So really pumped to be here and talk about that stuff today.

(Federico Francioni)

Hey, everyone. Thanks for having me. Glad to join this great panel here on this journey. I'm currently the Head of Digital Ecosystem at Meta. I've been working at Microsoft and TWC, so mostly I've been passing my time across two continents between Italy and the United States and been working with a bunch of different businesses that have all different goals to solve and

business to solve.

And that includes a lot of the accessibility problem, considering I'm a service designer, so my focus is really making sure that the experience that we give to all users is always the best.

(Josh Basile)

So great to be here today. My name is Josh Basile. I've been impacted by disability all my life. In second grade I was diagnosed with ADHD and a reading disability. And then when I was 18 years old, I was on a family vacation at the beach. A wave picked me up, threw me over my boogie board and slammed me on my head.

That day I shattered my neck and became paralyzed below my shoulders. So I'm a quadriplegic. C-4/5 quadriplegic. Power wheelchair user. I went back to school, got my undergrad, and graduated Magna Cum Laude from law school. So, since 2013 of a trial attorney in the Washington, D.C. area and doing tons of disability advocacy work, policy work on the Hill. And I'm a board member of the United Spinal Association for the last five years, and I love that organization. So dear to my heart. And I'm the Community Relations Manager at accessiBe. I'm just, I'm so honored and privileged to be here today with all of you and to have these conversations and to talk about this and see what we can do and to do more with an e-commerce world. Thank you for having me here today.

(John Griffin)

The technology available to develop and deploy e-commerce increases exponentially, almost, as we speak here today. And as any business must be an Internet business, what are the top of mind considerations that plague providing accessibility beyond the obvious blind and deaf problems? There's so much more to disability than that.

(Andy Burstein)

Well, you hit the nail on the head. Quite often we think about, you know, someone may have a vision issue and how they interact with the websites, but it obviously it impacts everyone, not only people that have, for lack of a better term, obvious disabilities and challenges, but also all the, quote unquote, invisible disabilities. Someone who may come to a website that may... I'll give you an example. My mother-in-law, for example, was in a bad car accident and she suffered some brain damage, which created a seizure disorder for her. So when you when you meet her, you don't notice in any obvious disability. And yet when she goes to a website, if the website has a great deal of flash and movement and automatically triggered videos, she can experience a seizure right there on the spot.

And she's a great consumer, God bless her. You know. So for someone to create a website and not take into account the impact that some of these subtle things have, whereas a company may focus on, you know, big picture stuff like let's make sure it's compatible with JAWs. Let's make sure this skip nav is okay. Like, those things are obviously crucial and low hanging fruit, but also to be sensitive to other individuals, whether if they have a cognitive disability or an intellectual disability, and how websites impact them.

(Emma Hardman)

Absolutely. And just to add on to that, you know, I think it really highly depends on what... how you're conveying your information. You know, if you're relying on visual content mainly, then yes, you want to think about those that may not be understanding that visibly. And you want to make sure that you're offering alternatives to make sure that that is understandable when you're thinking about, of course, things that are conveyed audibly, then of course, we want to make sure that we're including something for those that can't hear. They're deaf or hard of hearing, that sort of thing.

So it's definitely highly relevant what, you know, how you are conveying that information, what the biggest sort of senses that are relied upon for consumers on your site. And I think considering that and going from there as well, to make sure that that is, you know, crystal clear can be a really great place to start as well, to make sure that you are having that reach and that understandableness.

(Federico Francioni)

I would also add that to me, we're always following too much kind of the status quo. Like we're still been evolving website from our desktop consumption. And then we said, okay, now let's go mobile first. But we're still confined on the device, right? And that's the kind of fruition that a user gets. I think it's not the fact that we are confined by choice because I mean, let's face it, like a desktop or a mobile, they are very, very over indexing on vision, right?

So there will always be the challenge. So the way I like to see it is that there are opportunities to think about not websites, but places where you can buy things digitally that do not rely on vision. That's to me is the white space. Like when I think to approach like with design thinking on these areas is that can we actually create an internet based e-commerce experience that is led by voice?

For example, right? Something that as a narration, what you can see are you can feel products without having like a visual interface. So yes, there are a lot of change challenges on those websites because let's face it, they're always going to have it. But I think nobody yet or we are just starting has pushed the envelope to the point where we can say, hey, can we just craft a completely new experience to be inclusive of those people or think about those people first?

(Josh Basile)

Making sure that we create user experiences and making sure that the disability community, which in the United States, I think that it's important to talk about the numbers, the statistics. One fourth of the US population is considered to have in some form of disability. And there's a lot of different abilities that make up that one fourth of the US population. And but making sure like especially on e-commerce sites where you have a product that you're trying to sell and that you make sure that they can navigate from the home page to the product to be able to check out without having any barriers to being able to purchase that product.

Like I know for myself, I've, I've been stuck on certain areas where I need to actually ask a friend or a family member to help me get through to the end location software. We're navigating with the on screen keyboard, you name it. But like if we make sure that we create an experience

from start to end, especially with buying products, you want... People with disabilities have a lot of money and they want to spend the money on your site.

So like, let's make it a little bit easier. Like, I'm trying to give you my money. Please take it and make let's, let's, let's do this.

(John Griffin)

Emma, you've been on the product side with Expedia and all of its complexities and being embedded in the front end design process. Could you shed some light on how companies should be approaching the starting point in terms of centering on accessibility?

(Emma Hardman)

Absolutely. Centering the user, centering those with disabilities in accessibility work is, you know, profoundly important. I think that's key to any accessibility work. And I think the best way to do it... kind of, you know, as Federico was referring to before, but, you know, thinking about the, you know, the usability of the site from the start instead of refactoring at the end, which is where a lot of companies still are. Starting with that usability research, ensuring that there is equal representation in your product research, in your product building, in conversations around what's coming next, ensuring that there's that equal representation of every type of user which includes disabilities, disabled users, is really, really key to making sure that you are going to end up with that accessible product. And, you know, at the end of the day, it's also going to be a better product for everyone because the more that we work on the accessibility, the more that we actually improve the usability, you know, across the board. So I think bringing in, you know, that that perspective makes, you know, any product much better and much more inclusive.

I think another area where, you know, you can really bring in that voice beyond sort of that research side is talking to your customers directly. Depending on what sort of business you're in, bringing in those customer voices, ensuring that there is an open line of communication, there's a way to connect and represent those folks can be really, really useful as well. So that your designers, your product builders, your developers understand, you know, where the where the blocking is, you know, where the blocking issues are happening and where the issues are.

(Federico Francioni)

I, I like with what I was listening to and I was thinking, I, I read, I think was an outlet article in which most of the time when we are designing an inclusive product, or an accessible product, we're still going to that 75% of people with difficulties, right? And we tend to go like, if we imagine there was like this beautiful pyramid that was showing like of course, at the end we got like user with no difficulties, then you got people with like some difficulties, major difficulties and that ease at the top.

So what happened is that the top always get cut. And that goes against the principle of inclusive design. Because what you're doing is just you're adjusting your product to fit just a subset of the population. So to Emma's point, really inclusive design includes everything. Includes 100% of that triangle. And if you are intentionally cutting out a part of this population, you are pretty

much shying away from thinking about some features that might be difficult to get, but limit the innovation on the product itself.

(Josh Basile)

Disability in so many ways is a journey. So whether it's, whether it happens to you at birth, whether it happens to you at any point in your life or impact somebody that you love or care about, it's a journey and there's always more you can learn. And I've been at this now with the spinal cord injury for 18 years.

I'm both a mentor and a mentee. Every day I'm learning something new. Every day I'm teaching somebody else something new. And it's really... Accessibility's the same thing. Bringing accessibility within your platform, within your business's journey... It's a learning process. It's an ongoing conversation. It's not like you can flip a switch and you you get it, you understand it. It's everything's perfect and done. Like it's a journey that you have to keep getting doing and having the conversation getting better at. But the more you have the conversation, the more natural it feels and it becomes... It's not forced into the products or the platforms or the services that you're trying to provide. So it's really bringing accessibility, bring the conversations to the table.

Best way to do that is with the community because they live it. They experience it. They know it. They speak to disability and they're the ones that are trying to buy your products and services. So like having them have a seat at the table, it's just it really allows you to tap into an untapped market, untapped community and know them better and be able to sell it better, give them more representation.

So it's it's just it's smart business practice to include the community within your journey as well.

(Andy Burstein)

But one of the things that I find to be so incredible about this entire conversation is that you're all saying the exact same talking points that I say. If I were just me on this panel, I would have said all the things that you just said, ranging from the importance and the size of the marketplace to quite often the lack of respect in the marketplace and the lack of inclusion in the marketplace. Federico, the inclusive design concept and making sure that, you know, inclusive design is not just, you know, when everything you just said, but, Emma, it's something that you touched on, which is like so crucial.

And it really we've been really fortunate with this is that our patients drive the growth of our business. It's amazing when you ask someone who's felt underappreciated in the marketplace for their opinion about how you could be more supportive of them. And truly like not only like, hey, even opinions... Here's a suggestion box. Fill out something, open the suggestion box. But but really, when you ask like, what kind of challenges are you having with us? What could we be doing better? How can we be more accessible? What are we doing wrong? And even though sometimes that's uncomfortable to hear, if you really invite people to share that feedback, one, they'll talk your ears off in a positive way. And two, it takes all of the guessing out of how you drive your business.

And so what we need to do is be good listeners and create a really welcoming environment for people to share that feedback. And that's it. That's our business plan. And then we just follow that pack of people and continuously make adjustments and grow and be more accessible.

(John Griffin)

Federico, when we think about people implementing e-commerce, the complexities to those persons doing the implementation, it can be daunting.

The challenge for a starting point team with basics. What what challenge to is starting point team can you suggest that would provide third parties safety and security to know it's not just plug and play?

(Federico Francioni)

Well, I would say that we need to think realistically and not even too specifically about accessibility policy. And allow me to explain this a little bit better right now. There is a lot of focus on diversity and inclusion, and accessibility tends to be a part of that. Sometimes it's included under diversity, sometimes is under inclusion, depends on every company. And I think it's a good project. There are example of many companies that have a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, great or good. But I think overall in this equation, at least personally, we should add one more layer that is equity. And so when you combine equity, diversity and inclusion, you got what I think is the real core of every company in this world should be. That is belonging.

So is the fact that the people that work for that company or the people that will buy a product or service from the company develop are very natural and organic and spontaneous sense of belonging towards the company. So thinking about belonging, it's kind of like opens your mind, right? And as you might have already figured it out, I'm very biased about like design and being sure that we consider all the possible perspectives. But having this aspect of belonging allow speople to not only thinking about accessibility as a feature problem, but it's a part of this overall strategy that we need to have not only towards your customer, but even towards your employee.

Because if you don't have it internally, you won't have it externally, right? So you want to develop that mindset and maybe we need to have a like Chief Belonging Officer. Right? Maybe I'm just created today, going to see if I can patent it.

(Andy Burstein)

You're hired!

(Federico Francioni)

Thank you. So there is that one, right? Is the idea that we need to stop being functional and we need to be way more intentional on spreading the concept of belonging and diversity, inclusion and equity within the company and in every products that we do. So we cannot seat one person in the design team or one person just in legal or in compliance to be the one in charge for

accessibility because that person wouldn't have the scope or the bandwidth solve for all the problem.

We need to start from the very top and that could be like a good, provocative, not even too much way of doing it.

(Andy Burstein)

If Federico, I'm curious, as part of a multinational company, are there any countries in particular where society has like really high expectations for inclusive design? I, I know United States experience, so I'm just curious, you know, as you travel, like, are there other countries where it's expected and, and the website is almost like rejected if it's not as accessible as it could be?

(Federico Francioni)

Well, I have to say, United States is a very good example, probably globally. Globally, it's probably the trendsetter in many, many aspects of the industry. Definitely not the best yet. But I mean, we're improving. Right? And many companies are striving towards that concept. I think in smaller countries, like it's more like in Europe where I'm from, it just the nature itself of the country having less space and less way of implementing the solution that doesn't bring unfortunately attention to that.

I can speak for like the country I come from, like in Italy, there is a lot of accessibility problem. And that's because I mean most of the country is medieval. And talk about accessibility like I don't know in a castle or whatever it's something that even if you're thinking about how to solve, it's very difficult to because you can't make any major changes for the architecture, for example, of a building, right?

So when we're talking physical, there are limitations and then they're going through the culture and the mindset of the people. So that's why I'm saying we need to challenge the mindset because otherwise the culture will always define what are some standards of like accessibility and belonging for the rest of the folks. I hope I answered your question.

(Andy Burstein)

Oh, sure.

(Josh Basile)

In challenging the mindset. So it's really having those tough conversations, right? Making sure that we provide those trainings from the C-Suite all the way down to the new hires. Where we get people onboarded feeling belonging, feeling like they... It's that the whole education awareness side of it. I feel like since becoming, having my own spinal injury, I really found my voice as an advocate.

And it's, it's really so much, so much about really letting the world know kind of about your perspective or letting in letting businesses know that. You know, when you're hiring, when you're recruiting... When you're doing the hiring process... When you're trying to retain your employees, whether they have a disability or not, there's better ways of doing it and being more inclusive and letting them feel like they're a part of the company.

Like it's what I love so much, Federico, of what you're saying is... It's like, how do we how do we get people to get disability? To get accessibility? And why it's important, and why, like, if you do it right, it becomes it becomes something that but all the products they bring on board, if you keep having to, it's just it's like we're coming back to try to like fix, fix a painting that's already kind of done in the sense of, of what that this is the product we're bringing out.

And now let's go touch it up. And it's changing it. It's a lot harder to change it at that point. So like, I don't know, it's like, what how do you... I feel like with Meta, it's like being so large... It's like a perfect example. How do you really get it to all those people within the company so that they get it?

It might be easier when you have five employees to do that. When you have, you know, 50,000, 500,000 or... Don't know how many employees you guys have? Quite a few. How do you... how do you recommend from one if you're a small business to a large business?

(Federico Francioni)

I would say that many, like all the large companies I've been like fortunate enough to work for or with... they are pushing these pillars as really the foundation of their culture. So there is always in all these large companies there will be people really working on what is the culture of the company, right? Because if you don't have a culture, the companies lost. If you got people that only work for your company for the money, they're going to be gone.

Right? You will never have like people that have a sense of belonging for your company. So culture is very important. And I know that every company, especially the large one, have a different like flavor that they like to spin and they should be on this issue. I think that if I have to define in one word, no matter what company it is, I will call it respect.

Respect for the time of the individual, respect for the dignity, respect for the ability of the individual and respect for the means of an individual. If you use these really great what is respect to then you can call it accessibility, you can call it whatever you want. But I think that's the one word that we use to, no matter the size, no matter what you do, it's probably the one word I will tattoo on my body.

That's the one.

(Josh Basile)

Emma, I know you were saying about from the beginning that you've you've had every single role within a company, like what about you? Like like the you were talking about this idea. I mean.

(Emma Hardman)

It's so interesting to talk about this because I think one thing that we are all kind of floating in is the inherent ableism in our society. Right? Whether we're talking about the built environment, whether we're talking about the digital online environment, you know, talking about old castles, talking about transportation, all sorts of things. There is, you know, such a struggle to focus on disability needs in so many parts of our culture.

And that's why I think accessibility work can be really special, because it's a way to that increase, that awareness in an area that people might not traditionally think about and can really light the fire for people to start thinking about a lot of things in a new way. And I think the fact that not only are we talking about, you know, our consumers, when we're talking about e-commerce and digital accessibility, we're talking about our coworkers, right?

We're talking about our hiring practices. We're talking about the meetings we hold, the emails we send, the documentation we write. There are so many different areas where we can impact accessibility and learn about it that might not be the traditional end product. Of course we care about that as well. The other thing to call out, though, is, you know, I absolutely agree that there must be, you know, coming from a leadership level of involvement in this.

And I love that belonging, the Director of Belonging or the VP of Belonging or whatever we want to call it. But, you know, it's also, of course, the grassroots work, right? And the effort and the processes that are required to get accessibility to become business as usual, because we're in this space right now where, you know, we are in need of this culture shift.

It has been going on in our industry. You know, there's it's slow movement, but people are learning. You know, there's a little bit more education for designers, for computer scientists, for product developers around accessibility. It's still nowhere close to what we need. And so often the role of someone working on accessibility in a company is really to educate and increase that awareness because there is so little of it coming in from people, you know, for the main part that are entering the company.

So I think the more that we can also just processitize, not a word probably, accessibility and think about how we can plug it into the ways that you might perform your role otherwise and make it, you know, that business as usual piece is kind of where we need to head with ensuring that that it is that it's included and that it is, you know, part of that culture, whether it is the company's culture or your personal core values, etc..

(John Griffin)

Josh. Okay. So before we move off of design and development, we need to ask how do we ensure compliance? For organizations just new to this, there's guidance and help that's available. You in fact, have implemented your way into this work and at using this work at a very, very personal level. You care to share some wisdom on that?

(Josh Basile)

Well, there's so many different organizations that provide user testing these days. I know there's

Fable, there's, you know, United Spinal's got a tech access board that has over 100 wheelchair user testers. There's all these great companies and organizations out there that you can go to to bring that disability population to have a seat at the table, to test it out and to share their experiences.

And you also can you know, there's social media, there's organizations called Meta and Facebook out there. You could put a post out and ask people to come join, join user testing. There's so many different community groups out there. So it's just a matter of taking the time to invite those people to the table and to learn from them. And, you know, and within many different populations and many different abilities.

So it's like that the more you can invite, I feel like you're going to get more feedback. And feedback is a good thing, like whether or not you use that feedback and go with it and change something, or whether or not you're just listening and you hear it, it's going to have an impact in some shape or form.

So it's just... I'm just a big believer of really inviting as many people to the table because the second that you close out a unique population, you've basically silenced them or not included them in that and in your journey. And that's just it... just it's not a best practice, in my opinion. It's not smart business.

(Andy Burstein)

So sure. And just that's perfect just to build upon that. I wasn't creating that like it was like talking points for people in the community to educate the marketplace, not in a confrontational way. Like, Oh, I couldn't do this, this and this. But hey, here's my challenge with my experience with your company, organization, business. Let me explain to you what a screen reader is, for example. You know, more often than not, a lot of the vendors we work with, we keep explaining that we do teach them what a screen reader is and explain to them what a screen reader is. Some of the health care providers we work with, explain to them some of these things. And more often than not, they seem to be receptive, they want to learn. But quite often someone doesn't with someone just swallows it and says, Oh, I can't access this website, I can't access this business.

And they disengage. Or quite often it's a confrontational thing, like, Oh, I couldn't get your website, and now all of a sudden the person is in a, in an adversarial relationship. So to really like use this as an opportunity to empower this army of people who have this knowledge throughout the world to educate the marketplace on how they can be more inclusive. And I think that would really make some huge changes in the marketplace.

(Emma Hardman)

Yeah. And just to add to that, you know, I absolutely don't, you know, I think it's up to all of us to to increase that awareness. And, you know, it's not necessarily... it's easy to fall into the place of, you know, it it's on the part of the disabled folks to educate and that kind of thing. And that's not what we're saying. We're saying that, you know, it's again, centering the lived experience. There's a phrase from disability activism in the nineties. It's still used a lot. That's a great phrase. That's "nothing about us without us." Meaning policies shouldn't be made, you know, things

shouldn't but be put together unless we're centering the disabled experience and folks that that live with that. Right? And I think, thinking about that in terms of product research, development, building, every single part of a company honestly is going to make everything more inclusive and better.

We know that, you know, disability is a dimension of diversity, right? And it's adding to, you know, the power and the the quality of of any organization to have those really important lived experiences and voices coming, you know, leading the way and then, you know, being supported.

(John Griffin)

Federico, lawsuits. They're increasing. Is that because the technology is missing what the requirements are? Noncompliant? Are there other roadblocks that some within the business sites themselves ignore, or is it just litigation for litigation sake?

(Federico Francioni)

I think that these are just a symptom. I think if you look into the root cause, it's a good continuation. Like I said, of what Emma just said is the fact that accessibility and inclusion doesn't have to be one step of the process at the end, like testing. Who cares about just testing? It's the fact that it has to go through the entire flow of design, right?

That's why it's called inclusive design. That's why, for example, one of the best projects I've ever worked on in my work at my previous companies was building a new office. And building this new office we really crafted everything around inclusive personas that add permanent, temporary and situational disabilities. So we were thinking of people that can be like in a wheelchair, you know.

So more on the physical side, you were thinking about people that may have like a broken arm to stay still on the on the touch as one of the five senses. And you can also think about situational... people that were just added. I don't know, maybe they they were mourning a loss. Right. And we were trying to blend the thinking, the persona and everything that we were building in the office to be reflective of those like situation and scenarios.

So when you start doing that, when you start and now a lot of people know I'll do an inclusive design and it's becoming a practice of standards. Then you are blending everything in the final product. So the fact that you are testing with all kind of user is just a part of that, right? I don't I wouldn't be happy just by testing my product with people with disabilities, for example.

Right. I want to make sure that the entire process is inclusive. And if I don't, most likely it means again, it's a reflection that the company doesn't think that belonging, inclusion, accessibility is important. And I will even argue that I doubt the product itself is accessible, let alone the e-commerce websites, because the e-commerce is just a way to sell the product.

So always going back to the mentality and the culture. If you don't believe that you have to develop a sense of belonging in your workforce and in a in the customer, then you're going nowhere. So that's why at the end that you see all these litigation compliance issues, because

we are not there yet as a mindset that then transcends into people process technology. We need to start with people first.

(John Griffin)

When we look at the deployment issue, Emma, you brought up an excellent point with regards to testing weight along the process of trying to develop compliance. Yet logic would imply that testing late can also be too late if the need to deploy is at deadline and forces companies to just push forward.

(Emma Hardman)

It's really a shame. You know, I think a lot of companies when they start working on accessibility and it may be a result of a lawsuit, as we were just talking about, which is, again, a symptom of the issue, are really focused on the end result, right, on that live site, on the live product. And that is part of the pie.

You want the live experience to be accessible, but there will never be any profound, you know, needle movement in this area until you're including accessibility in the entire product development lifecycle: user research, design, product development, and in actual engineering development testing, that sort of thing. So I think there's certainly a place for auditing and for testing because that's how we know, that's how we know where we stand, right?

That's how we know the quality of the of the experience for the end user. And that's how we know where we need to make improvements. But you got to lift up your head and think about kind that wider process and how we got there as opposed to considering that to be the be all end all of accessibility.

That is, I think for many companies the first step, you know, it's putting out those fires, it's handling those live issues. But once you start to get those under control, it's very, very important to start all the way at the top with your designers, with your user research, and start thinking about how you can build inclusively from the start in order to I mean, among other things, save time and money.

Why would we want to keep introducing bugs and then fix them at the very end and refactor our whole designs? It makes so much more sense to I mean, you know, if nothing else, it makes so much sense to think about this from the very start so you don't have to go back and fix things. Of course, that's the least of the reasons we want to do, is we want to do this because of equality and because it's actually a better experience.

But but honestly, I think, you know, literally for efficiency sake, thinking about how you can start with accessibility in mind, in partnership with everything else that your designers and product developers are thinking about is really the only way that we'll ever get to scalable accessibility. And it is like anything else, you know, like Josh said, it's a journey and we're never going to be perfect.

And I think that's the other thing that companies often think when we start working like, Oh, I have so many bugs, I'm we're never going to be, I'll do this. So let's just not try. No, it's a journey

you have. Every company has bugs. Any live site has bugs. We all have bugs. That's okay. It's okay to have accessibility bugs.

It's about how we're handling them, how we're learning from them, and how we're preventing them in the future that we can really make change in this area.

(Josh Basile)

And compliance can't just be a forced checkbox. Like it really needs to be a mindset where we're, we're trying to build out all the different areas, all the different pieces of the puzzle of the business journey and making sure that each piece of the puzzle can be touched by accessibility, by inclusion, by just the right conversations. And Emma, you said it right, that conversations don't have to be perfect.

It's a learning process. But the more and more you do it, the better you get at it, the better you speak it. You become more fluent at it and it's not forced.

(Emma Hardman)

Practice makes perfect.

(John Griffin)

Let's move to usability a little bit. Starting with Andy, because our time is almost gone. What would be the one thing that you would encourage the audiences to focus on? Hopefully when they decide that, or if they decide that this is where they need to go.

(Andy Burstein)

I think it's... good question. The concept of accessibility, it's not it's not a there's like a finish line for accessibility.

When you cross it, you're like, Oh, that's it. We're accessible now. But, you know, like we're down to check all the boxes. We are now accessible, right? You know, we built our business from the ground up, you know, focusing like we're Accessible Pharmacy, right? Everything that we do, we're like, we're going to do everything accessible and we're going to launch our business. You know, fast forward to today, we're still integrating elements of accessibility for a few reasons.

One, there are always changes in technology. We're trying to figure out now, like, how does artificial intelligence play a role into what we're doing, for example. Two, where our population of subgroups that we service are expanding, whereas originally we focused on exclusively the blind and low vision community, we had a small but growing population of deaf-blind patients, which then led us into the deaf community.

So we had to learn all about that and figure out how do we integrate accessibility for the deaf community. We're in the process now of trying to develop solutions for, you know, individuals in the paralysis community. So how do we learn about that and make that component of our business accessible without undermining the accessibility to the other groups we work with?

We have an initiative to develop programs for the neurodiversity community. So each of these things, it's ongoing. So we are Accessible Pharmacy, but we're literally like we're scratching the surface of accessibility. It's ongoing. So to bring it all back, the one thing that I can share is that accessibility is not a finite collection of boxes that get checked. It's an ongoing pursuit of accessibility which ties back into like accessible design is inclusive design, which is good design, which is really good for business.

(Emma Hardman)

Yeah. I'm going to take a tactical approach to this question. I think especially having worked as a front end developer, worked closely with design, etc.. And I think if there's one thing that I could ask developers and designers and product developers to do, it's to familiarize yourself with the way that the disabled users interact with digital UI. And, you know, I think there's a ton of information that can be found by running automated tests, using Deque's axe or Google Lighthouse or all these great things.

But you won't understand the context of all that information unless you're actually practicing and using the tools that users use. So I mean, because we're talking about e-commerce apps, a lot of what we're probably talking about today is that visual experience. And so we are talking about ensuring that those pages and apps work with screen reader software. So I highly recommend looking for your local screen reader.

So if you have a Mac, if you have a Mac iOS or desktop turning on Voiceover, it's already there. If you have a PC, you can download NVDA for free. If you have an Android phone, you can get Talkback for free from the Google Play Store. Fire it up and see what your content is like using that. And I think that that's going to give you a lot of context for why the issues that are sort of flagged in the accessibility world are flagged. And, you know, certainly is very important in terms of like empathy building and just understanding your user.

(Federico Francioni)

I will love... I think I talk enough about the cultural aspect and the mindset, so I'm not repeating myself on that one. I would love to spend one minute talking about the fact that we need to remember what Joshua said about the impact of people with disability in the market and the fact that those people are not as visible as it might seem.

And that's what Andy even mentioned like at the very beginning about people that can have a

seizure by looking at the website, for example. Even just through this webinar like this. And whether people, however people are consuming it. You couldn't tell but like I've been using one of these AirPods and that's because I'm half deaf. Nobody will ever be able to notice if I were to put two of them that is no way for you to tell.

So there is a lot of disabilities or difficulties, whatever you want to call it that are invisible and we should think about all of them. So don't be in there always looking for the obvious. Don't always think about the handicapped. There are a lot of handicaps that are very, very intriguing to explore and so forth.

(Josh Basile)

I would want to let, you know, e-commerce businesses know that, yes, change change is not easy. Change is not easy for anyone, whether you're a business or an individual. But, you know, with accessibility, you've got to start somewhere. So if you haven't been building it in the time is now, you're going to end up doing it later on.

So might as well do it now. It's going to make it easier for you. And it's and the more that you do it, the better you get at it. Bring it in. There's there's you don't have to be alone on this journey and you can't be alone on this journey because we got to learn from each other. So bring in the community, bring in experts, bring in consultants, bring in resources, bring in technologies. You name it, whatever, whatever it is that you need to bring in you, you don't have to do it alone, but you got to start now or or just continue to build up wherever you're at right now. Do it to the next level. So let's do it together. Let's be on this journey together and let's do better together. Let's make a more accessible world.

[Closing]

(Lori Litz)

Thank you so much to everyone on the panel and Samuel from Fable for providing such valuable content for today's event. I'm certain you've taken away at least one key piece of advice that you can use immediately within your organization to create a more accessible experience for your customers. And that's our goal here at Accessibility.com to provide you with the resources, information, and tools you need to further your accessibility journey.

Just give me a couple of hours to get everything published, and the content from today's event will be available on demand for you to rewatch. If provided by the presenters, additional content will be available for download as well, and of course, we will have the transcripts available, too. Once we get that done, you'll receive an email from me with the direct links to the content.

But you can always visit AccessibilityPlus.Live, navigate down to past events and locate today's event or any previous event to get the content on demand. The presentations are available under each event page's agenda with direct links to recorded content and supporting documents. While you're there at AccessibilityPlus.Live, make sure to register for next month's event:

"Class is in Session: The ABC's of Accessibility in Education." If you have any questions about today's event, a past event, or an upcoming event, please feel free to reach out to me directly at Lori@Accessibility.com. Thank you again for your time today. We're so looking forward to having you join us again next month.