

Making IT access possible for everyone on the Internet

Potential of the Internet

Web access can offer disabled people new opportunities to interact with others and to obtain the information, goods and services they require, quickly and easily. But despite the great investment made in website design, the customer interface often tends to obstruct rather than facilitate the communication process.

Organisations seeking competitive advantage must ensure that their websites are accessible to all. According to the Disability Rights Commission, there are 6.7 million disabled individuals of working age in the UK - a population with a spending power of around £50 billion. To exclude customers and employees with a disability from your internet and intranet sites is also to disregard the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act.

How can AbilityNet help?

AbilityNet has a comprehensive knowledge of good practice in website design, of the hardware and software solutions used by disabled people and broad practical experience of the problems they may encounter when navigating the web. Robin and his team offer a range of dedicated services to help organisations make the most of the web, whether or not their internet or intranet sites are operational or still in design. These include:

- A range of accessible templates to start a new website in the most cost effective manner.
- In-house accessibility presentations covering the principles of accessible web design and the types of specialist hardware and software used by disabled individuals to access computers and the web.
- A comprehensive audit of a site whether operational or in design to ensure compliance with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) or Section 508 guidelines.
- A site 'Accessibility Snapshot' comprising an in-depth audit of a representative selection of pages and providing an indication of site-wide issues.
- Usability testing with a range of specialist access software and hardware used by disabled customers, such as browsers, screen-reading and voice recognition technology
- Direct support to the website designer on accessibility issues as well as help to implement the recommendations arising from the review process.

- Review and assessment of an organisation's in-house design standards and guidelines.
- A similar range of services for software applications.

We can let you know what each of these levels of service will cost you.

AbilityNet also offers:

- Software accessibility auditing
- Free information and advice on adaptive solutions for anyone with a limiting condition
- A full assessment service
- Professional awareness training
- Consultancy to employers and organisations
- Equipment supply

AbilityNet and the Web

AbilityNet is a charity that advises and helps thousands of disabled people every year, ensuring that they can access IT. As the UK's leading authority on computing and disability, AbilityNet also works with all the major departments of State, as well as numerous private sector companies including Ford, HSBC, IBM and Microsoft.

Our experience shows that some 50 per cent of websites fail basic usability tests and in addition, a similar percentage of potential sales through the internet are lost as a result of confusion.

Robin Christopherson, AbilityNet's Web Consultancy Manager, is an accessibility expert. Despite being blind, he uses a computer effectively by relying on speech output to access the full range of mainstream software including e-mail and the web. He understands the importance of good design at first-hand:

"If I find a site difficult to use because my requirements for access are not met, I'll go elsewhere - and I'm not alone."

Making your Website accessible

Ensuring that your website is accessible to disabled people will make it easier for everyone to use, whether or not they have special requirements. Making a site user-friendly does not mean compromising creativity, it simply obliges the designer to concentrate on the end user. Good design ensures that a website is optimised for every visitor regardless of their browser, the speed of their connection, their preferences or any specialist technology they may use.

For further information please contact:

AbilityNet * PO Box 94

Warwick * CV34 5WS

*Tel: 01926 312847 * Fax: 01926 407425

Freephone for individuals:

*0800 269545 (*Minicom accessible)

Email: enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

Web: www.abilitynet.org.uk

Charity no. 1067673

October 2003