Help build this generation's "ramp" for blind and disabled: website accessibility

It's a question of access. And, it's a question of fairness.

When passed into law in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sought to redress discrimination against people living with disability. Perhaps best known for helping remove actual, physical barriers preventing the wheelchair-bound and others from accessing schools, businesses, and government buildings, it also serves to prevent the visually challenged from being shut out of the same opportunities that sighted people have. These include those reachable through the click of a mouse.

That access is necessary for people to live and work, and a growing number of judges across the U.S. are hearing lawsuits brought by visually and hearing-impaired plaintiffs alleging that specific websites violate their rights under the ADA's Title III because they cannot access them.

This untenable situation shared by visually and hearing-impaired people across the country gets more difficult as the web becomes ever-more dependent on technology. The visually impaired feel the impacts whenever they use websites and software that are not

Confirming Your Website is Accessible

coded to enable digital readers to to accurately verbalize what's on the screen. Blind workers are forced to rely on co-workers taking time out of their busy schedules to read documents to them, fill out forms and type responses. In 2018, the number of ADA compliance lawsuits in federal court nearly tripled; the highest incidences of filings were in New York and Florida.

The reason is simple: millions of Americans who are blind or visually impaired are being increasingly excluded. They are just as digitally dependent as the rest of us, needing technology for online shopping, entertainment, education, and employment. Too many websites fail to support these basic needs.

While institutions spend billions every year on driving people to visit and engage with their websites, it's hard to believe they then don't spend the little required to reach the significant audience represented by the visually impaired. It's not only exclusionary, it's a bad business decision.

We can't support a culture of exclusion, and the solution to restoring access is readily available. At Miami Lighthouse, we provide auditing services for private and public websites, including full examination of coding and design, audits of accessibility of content, and content usability tests.

Past customers of Miami Lighthouse's Website Accessibility Compliance services include a variety of public and private sectors, such as city and county governments, educational and medical institutions, airlines and nonprofits. The implementation of our audit report findings demonstrates pro-active, civic-minded commitment to inclusion of all internet users.

Accessibility isn't only the right thing, it benefits everyone in the long run.

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