Empathy on Screen

A Fundamental Approach to Make Your Website Accessible
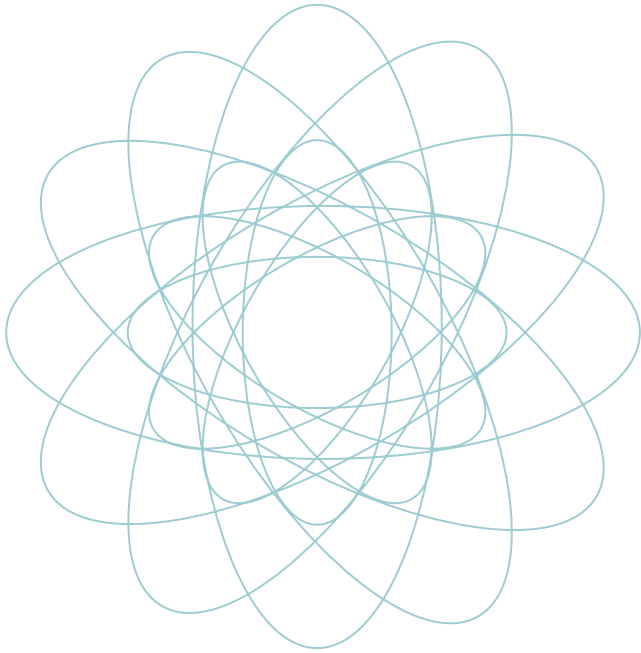
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BRANDING + DIGITAL MARKETING + WEB + SEO + DESIGN + PRINTING

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In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of accessibility in website development, software, and design.

Website accessibility goes beyond JUST complying with regulations: it is about leading with empathy and understanding the diverse needs of all users. It involves creating inclusive experiences that allow individuals with disabilities — including visual, hearing, cognitive, and motor impairments — to navigate and interact with digital content.

Embodying Empathy:
Our Commitment to Accessibility

At 1905 New Media, we are committed to the accessible design and development of our clients' websites and applications. We aim to provide all users equal access and an equivalent experience, to empower these users and promote their independence.

Embracing website accessibility offers numerous benefits:

- Make sure all users have an equitable experience
- Improve the usability and effectiveness of digital platforms
- Reduce the need for costly retrofits and future updates
- Increase the user base by making platforms accessible to everyone

Technology has the power to bridge the gap between users with different abilities, offering new possibilities and opportunities. However, it is essential to address potential barriers that individuals with disabilities may encounter when using digital platforms. Through empathy-driven design and code that adapts to the user's technology, we can break down these barriers — to ensure everyone can fully participate in the digital world.

We believe these practices embody empathy on screen.

In the use of technology, **disability** refers to a limited interaction with a digital environment. It is important to recognize these barriers exist in the environment — not the individual.

Equivalence describes the state or quality of things being equal in value or function despite their differences in form or appearance. It is important to note that *equivalence* is not the same thing as *equal*, which refers to things being the same. Equivalence helps ensure that different formats or alternatives provided for content — such as text alternatives for images or captions for videos — offer an equivalent experience and convey the same information.

For example, when a person using a wheelchair cannot enter a building, the lack of a ramp outside the building is the problem. Similarly, in the digital realm, issues such as poor color contrast, non-semantic code, or lack of screen reader support create barriers for users with disabilities.

☑ Accessible = Easy to See

☑ Accessible = Easy to Hear

☑ Accessible = Easy to Use

☑ Accessible = Easy to Understand

ADA Compliance and Web Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities. While the ADA primarily focuses on physical spaces, its principles extend to the digital realm. Web accessibility is crucial in promoting equal access and ensuring compliance with ADA requirements.

By embracing accessibility practices and building our websites with empathy, we can create digital experiences that are truly inclusive, providing equal opportunities for all individuals.

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Accessibility considerations are for users with these special needs:

Visual	Vestibular	Hearing	Mobility	Cognitive

Compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are a set of international standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to provide guidance on creating accessible web content. WCAG 2.2 is the most recent version and outlines comprehensive principles, guidelines, and success criteria for achieving website accessibility.

The P.O.U.R. Principles:
## Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust

WCAG 2.2 is based on the POUR principles, which offer a framework for designing accessible websites:

• **Perceivable:** Web content is available to all users, regardless of their sensory abilities. This includes providing alternatives to non-text content, such as images, through text descriptions or captions.

• **Operable:** Website functionality can be operated by various means, including keyboard navigation. This includes designing accessible forms, allowing users to control time limits, and providing clear instructions and error messages.

• **Understandable:** Users can comprehend the information and operation of the website. This includes using clear and consistent language, logically organizing content, and providing assistance when necessary.

• **Robust:** A wide range of user agents can clearly interpret the website, including assistive technologies. This involves using standard HTML and CSS coding practices, providing proper labels and input fields, and using accessible multimedia formats.

To meet WCAG guidelines and promote website accessibility, several key areas of focus should be considered:

• **Color and Contrast:** Apply sufficient color contrast between text and background elements so individuals with visual impairments can easily read content.
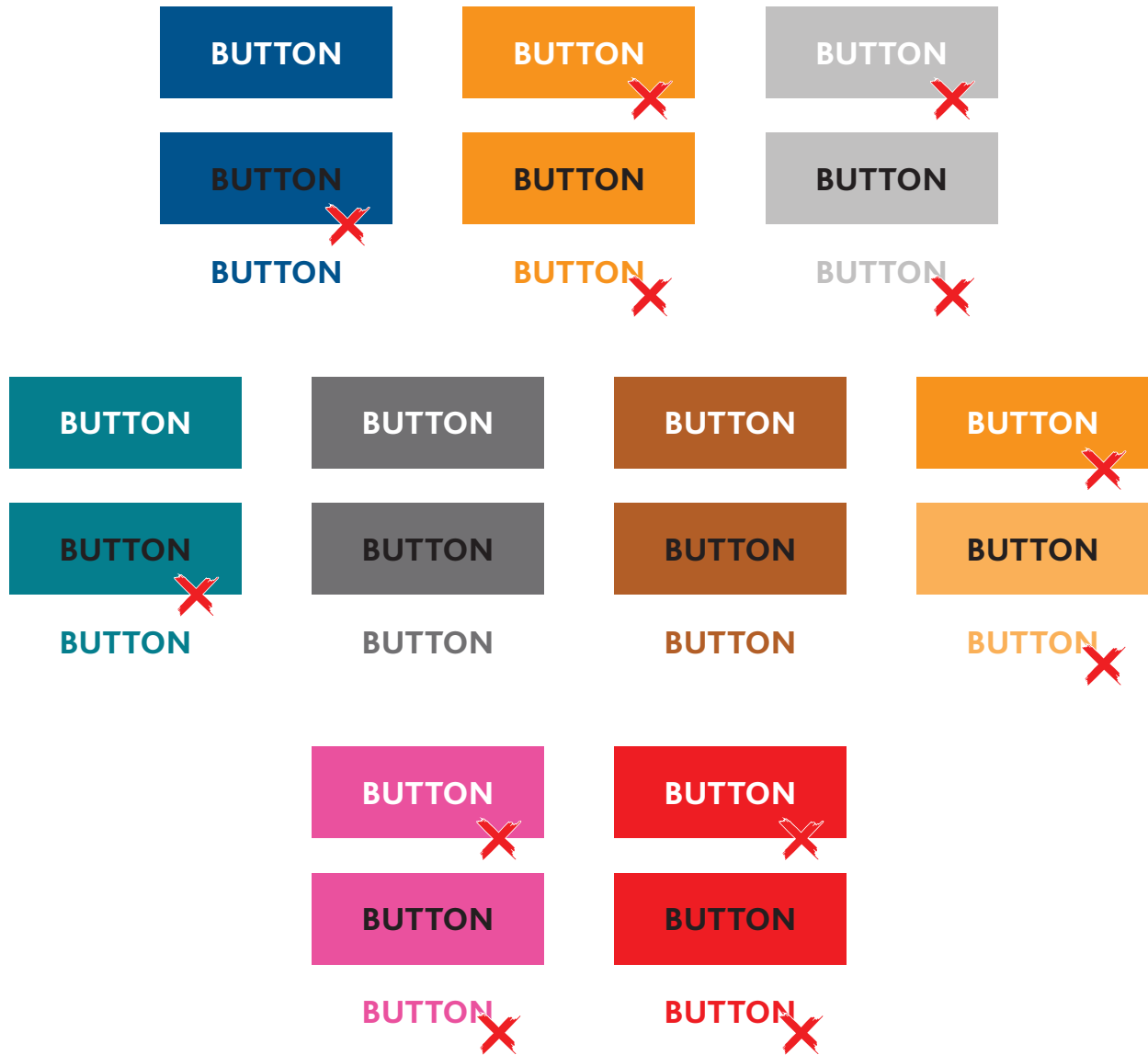

• **Semantic HTML:** Use appropriate HTML elements to structure content and convey meaning. This allows assistive technologies and screen readers to interpret the content accurately.

• **Video Accessibility:** Provide captions or transcripts for videos to ensure individuals with hearing impairments can access the audio content. Additionally, offer sign language interpretation for important video content.

- **Browser Zoom Compatibility:** Make sure the website is usable and navigable when users zoom in or enlarge the content within their web browser, so individuals with low vision can adjust the interface to their needs.

Browser resize must support up to 400% zoom
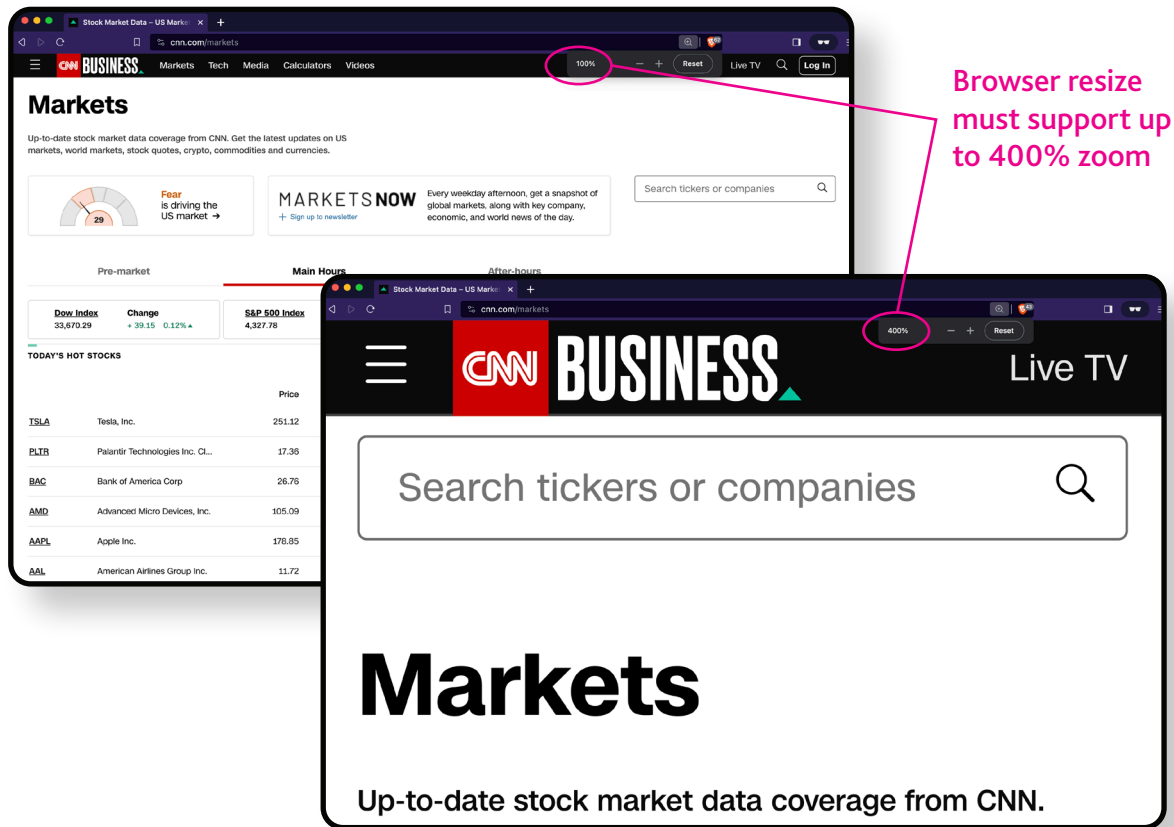
- **Headings and Structure:** Use proper heading hierarchy to create a well-organized structure. This allows users to easily navigate the website using assistive technologies.
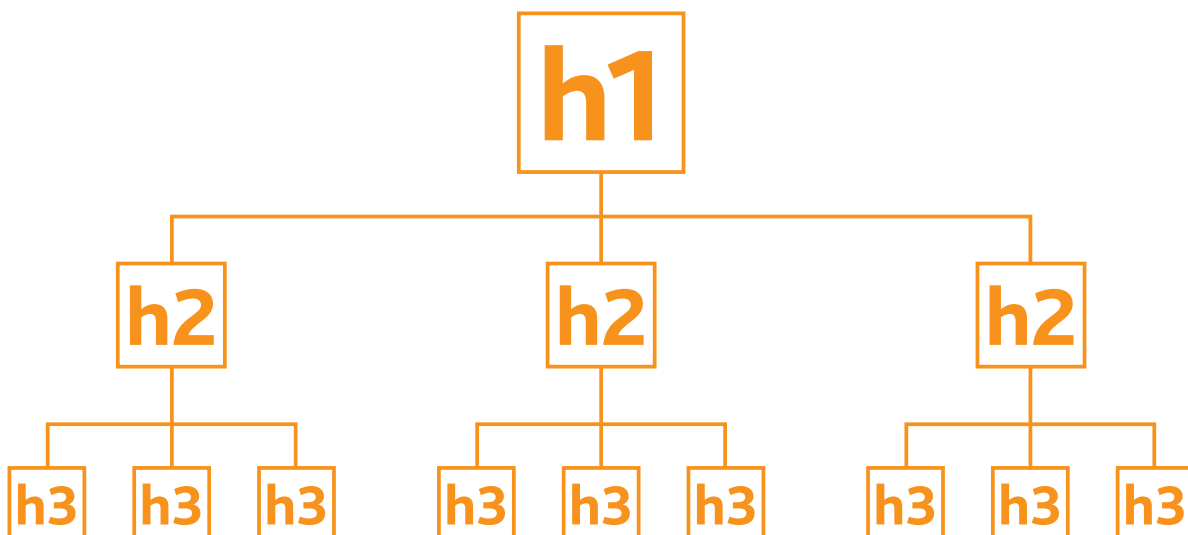
- **Form Accessibility:** Implement accessible form controls, such as proper labeling and error messages, to ensure individuals with disabilities can use web forms.

- **Keyboard Accessibility:** Make sure all functionality on the website is operable using a keyboard alone. This is essential for individuals who rely on keyboard navigation due to motor disabilities or limited dexterity.

- **Image Alternative Text (also referred to as alt text or alt tags):** Provide descriptive alternative text for non-text content, such as images or videos, allowing individuals with visual impairments to access the information using screen readers.

Let's take a moment to remind ourselves of the importance of empathy, using this example image of two adorable kittens. This image serves as a reminder that empathy is not only about understanding the needs of individuals with disabilities, but also about embracing the shared experiences that unite us all. Text alternatives for non-text content, such as this kitten image, ensure individuals using screen readers can access the information.

**Alternative text for this image could say: **

WCAG Levels and Success Criteria

WCAG 2.2 includes three levels of conformance: A, AA, and AAA. Each level corresponds to a set of success criteria that websites can meet to demonstrate their accessibility level. Level A represents the minimum requirements, while AA and AAA provide increasingly higher standards of accessibility.

It is important to strive for AA conformance whenever possible, as it ensures a more inclusive experience for a wide range of users. However, compliance with WCAG is an ongoing effort, and it is recommended to aim for continuous improvement over time.

Beyond Compliance: Creating an Inclusive Web Experience

Web accessibility is not just about meeting legal requirements, but about creating an inclusive web experience that empowers all users. While compliance with accessibility standards is a crucial first step, going beyond compliance allows us to create a more inclusive and user-centric digital world.

Inclusion goes beyond accessibility by embracing the diversity of users and acknowledging that each user interacts with the web in a unique way. It considers a wide range of abilities, language preferences, cognitive skills, and technological limitations to remove barriers and provide an equitable experience for everyone.

HTML Accessibility and Assistive Technology

Assistive technology plays a vital role in helping individuals with disabilities to access digital content. A focus on HTML accessibility helps a website adapt to various types of assistive technology, such as:

• **Screen Readers:** Screen readers verbally convey on-screen content, so individuals with visual impairments can navigate websites and applications. They convert text into speech or braille output.

• **Magnification Software:** Magnification software helps individuals with low vision by enlarging on-screen content, making it easier to read and interact with.

• **Alternative Input Devices:** Speech recognition software, eye-tracking devices, and other tools provide alternative ways to interact with computers and mobile devices.

• **Captions and Transcripts:** Captions and transcripts assist individuals with hearing impairments by providing text alternatives for audio and video content.

• **Accessibility Extensions and Plugins:** Various browser extensions and plugins enhance accessibility by providing features like text resizing, color contrast adjustments, and keyboard navigation shortcuts.

We believe empowering people to share their stories leads to meaningful connections and the realization of their dreams.

Inclusive Design Principles

While assistive technology is crucial, creating an inclusive web experience goes beyond relying solely on these tools. It involves embracing inclusive design principles to ensure the digital environment is accessible to all users. To create an inclusive web experience, we can apply the following principles:

- **Universal Design:** Adopt a universal design approach that considers the needs and preferences of as many users as possible. You can minimize the need for separate accommodations by focusing on the principles of inclusion.

- **User-Centered Design (UCD):** Place the user at the center of the design process. Conduct user research, usability testing, and gather feedback to understand users' diverse perspectives, needs, and preferences. This helps ensure the final product meets their requirements.

- **Clear and Consistent User Interface (UI):** Create a UI that is easy for all users to navigate. Use familiar design patterns, intuitive layouts, and effective labeling to guide users through the website.

- **Progressive Enhancement:** Employ progressive enhancement techniques to prioritize core functionality and content, so all users have access to essential information. Enhancements and additional features can be added for users with more advanced technologies.

- **Performance and Speed:** Optimize the performance and speed of the website to provide a seamless experience for users with slow or limited internet connections. Minimize file sizes, reduce unnecessary delays, and prioritize efficient code to enhance usability.

Creating an inclusive web experience involves recognizing and removing barriers within the digital environment. By considering the specific needs of individuals with disabilities and embracing assistive technologies, designers can create accessible digital platforms.

Ongoing Accessibility Maintenance

Creating an inclusive web experience is an ongoing effort. Your organization should regularly conduct accessibility audits, monitor user feedback, and incorporate accessible design practices into routine maintenance activities. Keep up with technological advancements and emerging accessibility guidelines to continuously improve the inclusivity of your web content.

We can create web experiences that truly empower and include all users by going beyond compliance and embracing an inclusive design approach. By considering diverse perspectives, applying inclusive design principles, and engaging in ongoing accessibility maintenance, we can foster an inclusive web culture where diversity is celebrated — and access is equal for all.

Have a Project?

We can't wait to hear about it!

Give us a call or send us an email to get started.

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