ADA-Compliant Self-Service Options Boost Customer Satisfaction

🏷 technology   regulatory   marketing   DEI

Summary: Taking steps to make your CFI more user-friendly for persons with disabilities can also translate to greater customer satisfaction. With heightened ADA rules pending, auditing your ADA friendliness is a smart thing to do.

Before there were fast-food restaurants, there were automats — restaurants launched in 1895 in Berlin, Germany, where individuals could purchase pre-prepared meals through vending machines and seat themselves without having to tip anyone. Food services company Horn & Hardart opened the first US automat location in Philadelphia in 1902, and new locations began to spring up in major cities across the Northeast. Their affordability and self-service appeal waned as Americans embraced the convenience of fast-food restaurants, and the popularity of automats declined throughout the 1970s.

Though the last Horn & Hardart automat in Manhattan closed in 1991, people's desire for contactless dining following the COVID-19 pandemic recently spurred the establishment of two new automats in Jersey City, NJ, and Brooklyn, NY. The banking industry knows a little something about Americans' love for the convenience of self-service options, as automated teller machines (ATMs) remain a staple in people's banking lives, even amid an overall welcoming of digital payments. Now, financial institutions need to revisit their self-service offerings, in light of new oversight from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Benefits of Compliance

ADA compliance can be beneficial to organizations because it makes their businesses much more attractive to the millions of people with disabilities. Though ADA compliance doesn't yet directly impact a website's rankings on major search engines such as Google, there is a good chance that will change down the road.

In the meantime, many of the same features that make websites more user-friendly and easier to navigate for people with disabilities can also enhance your website's search engine optimization (SEO) by providing a better user experience — something search engines like Google already factor into their rankings. In many cases, the simplest changes can dramatically improve the experience for disabled users.

One Design for All

Website design needs to be about more than just an attractive-looking home page with the latest features. It must incorporate accessibility for everyone, including the millions of individuals with significant vision or hearing constraints. Approximately 8% of the US population have vision problems, while roughly 15% of adults 18 or older experience some form of hearing loss. Such impairments can make it extremely difficult, if not completely impossible, for people within these groups to use some websites.

Yet, research from WebAIM found that, as recently as Feb. 2023, 96.3% of the top 1MM websites were not compliant with ADA guidelines. Despite this disconnect, Pew Research shows that 75% of Americans with disabilities use the internet daily, 72% own a smartphone, and 62% own a computer. Chances are, most — if not all — of this demographic has a need for a relationship with a financial services provider. For these

customers and potential customers, the need for easy access to online banking is just as crucial as the need for a particular product or competitive rates.

Providing accessibility to everyone is not only better for business, but it is also legally required. With potential rule changes regarding self-service kiosks, the ADA is taking aim at touchscreen kiosks — such as ATMs — that are not user-friendly for people with disabilities and lack features such as adequate physical keyboards, audible information, and adequate accessibility and privacy.

Looking Within

Since websites are constantly updated and expanded, even organizations that initially designed websites within ADA standards can have problematic areas within their sites. The best way for organizations to determine whether their websites and services are ADA-compliant and user-friendly for people with disabilities is to conduct regular audits, whether automated or manual. Automated audits rely on software that can scan an organization's website to identify trouble spots, based on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). While automated audits can be a good way to check overall ADA compliance, they are not foolproof.

Though more time-consuming and costlier, manual audits are better able to gauge the roadblocks that users with disabilities may encounter on an organization's website. This includes content that cannot be easily navigated with keyboard-only access or areas where text descriptions for images may be inaccurate or insufficient. Often, a combination of the two audit types is the best route to take.

The following are a few things to consider when auditing your website for ADA compliance and overall user-friendliness:

- **Lengthen page timeouts.** Provide an option to extend the time it takes to fill out online forms for people with disabilities. If forms time out too quickly, they can be impossible for someone with a sight impairment to complete.
- **Use accessible forms.** Try to avoid providing forms or content in standard PDF formats, as most screen reader technologies are not compatible. There are ways to make PDFs more accessible for those with disabilities, and those tools should be utilized whenever possible.
- **Add alt text for visuals.** Remember the importance of adding alt text, a short description of visual elements such as photos and graphics. Screen reader devices will be able to provide this description for users with visual impairments, who may not be able to see these items well.
- **Use high-contrast designs.** Contrasting colors are important for assistive technology tools. Low-contrast designs or a dark mode that isn't specifically designed to increase the contrast and visibility of content can make content more difficult to access.
- **Allow full keyboard navigation.** Keyboard navigation that is compatible with assistive technology is extremely important. Take time to comb through all parts of your site and make sure there aren't areas where keyboards cannot be used.

Ensuring your website is ADA-compliant is not only key to avoiding regulatory troubles, but it can also improve your CFI's overall accessibility and customer satisfaction. Not to mention, these changes can make your CFI more appealing to millions of people with disabilities. ADA-friendly characteristics can also boost your SEO. At a time when inclusivity is valued more than ever, ensuring your website and apps are user-friendly for all can provide a boost to your business's overall image.

STATE-OF-THE-ART ANALYTICS WITH EXPERT INSIGHT

Looking to maximize your business opportunities with the highest level of compliance? PCBB's Advisory Services provide state-of-the-art analytics with insight from our team of expert advisors to do just that. Solutions include CECL, stress testing, and customer profitability. Contact us today to learn more: info@pcbb.com.

ECONOMY & RATES

Rates As Of: 07/13/2023 05:44AM (GMT-0700)

Treasury	Yields	MTD Chg	YTD Chg
3M	5.47	0.04	1.05
6M	5.53	0.06	0.77
1Y	5.29	-0.10	0.59
2Y	4.67	-0.22	0.24
5Y	4.03	-0.13	0.03
10Y	3.83	0.00	-0.04
30Y	3.94	0.08	-0.02

FF Market	FF Disc	IORB
5.08	5.25	5.15

SOFR	Prime	OBFR
5.05	8.25	5.06