blue tangerine

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY
GUIDE

PRESERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS. **PROTECT** YOUR BUSINESS.

When developing a website, the needs of people with disabilities are often overlooked. It can be very difficult and even impossible for people with disabilities to use a website that is not fully accessible. For your website to serve its purpose, it must be accessible to everyone. In addition, providing equal access to information to all users via your website is the law. If your website is not accessible, you are at risk for an expensive lawsuit!

WHAT IS
WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY?

Web accessibility means adapting your website so that it is equally accessible to all people, meaning there are no barriers that prevent access to or interaction with your site by individuals with and without disabilities. Some of the disabilities that web accessibility addresses include:

| VISUAL | PHYSICAL | NEUROLOGICAL | AUDITORY | COGNITIVE |

Because many people with disabilities use assistive technologies, much of web accessibility involves ensuring that your website is compatible for these technologies. Some examples of assistive technologies include: **Screen Readers, Braille Terminals, Screen Magnification Software, Speech Recognition Software, Overlay Keyboards or Keyboard-only Navigation.**

Web accessibility guidelines are defined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to help you make your website accessible according to their standards as well as other legal statutes like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The document released by W3C about web accessibility is called "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1" (WCAG) and it lists three conformance levels.[1]

CONFORMANCE LEVELS

A

Minimum

Website is somewhat accessible but does not achieve broad accessibility.

AA

Midrange

Website is more accessible than level A and is generally acceptable.

AAA

Maximum

Website is more accessible than level A and AA and is not possible or very difficult to achieve.

For the sake of your website, you should be concerned about meeting the AA or midrange conformance level by following criteria outlined in WCAG. (Note: We recommend that you consult your legal team for advice about the right conformance level for your business.) We won't explain the specific criteria in this guide, but you can find it here: **https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/**

It is important to remember that conformance levels do not necessarily equate to the usability of your website.

For example, you can have an alternative text tag listed as "Fileimage5789" that passes the AA conformance level, but someone using a screen reader would not be able to understand the content of the image with this vague text. An alt tag reading "Golden retriever catching a red Frisbee at a park" is more informative to users, and it would still pass the acceptable conformance level. Only ¼ of AA conformance standard criteria can be tested on your website using automatic scanning software. The other ¾ of the standards require someone to manually test your website for issues.[2] By checking your website through automated website accessibility scanners and through manual testing, you will discover what accessibility issues you must fix in order to prevent lawsuits and help website users.

TOP WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

FOUR MAIN ISSUES THAT FREQUENTLY ARISE IN WEB ACCESSIBILITY LAWSUITS[3]

1. Missing alternative text from images
2. Missing alternative text from image maps
3. Missing labels in forms
4. Improper table markup

Other important web accessibility issues include

- Missing closed captions & text transcripts in videos
- Missing text transcripts in audio recordings
- Improper or unclear headings
- Unintuitive tab-through order for keyboard-only navigation
- Poor color contrast

BENEFITS OF WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

REDUCED LEGAL RISKS

If your website is not accessible, you are at risk for getting sued! The success and future of your business could be harmed if you are the subject of an accessibility lawsuit.

Many legal cases have happened recently because businesses overlooked or ignored the accessibility of their website. In fact, there was a 177% increase in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title III website accessibility lawsuits from 2017 to 2018.[4] These lawsuits strongly contribute to the current emphasis on web accessibility.
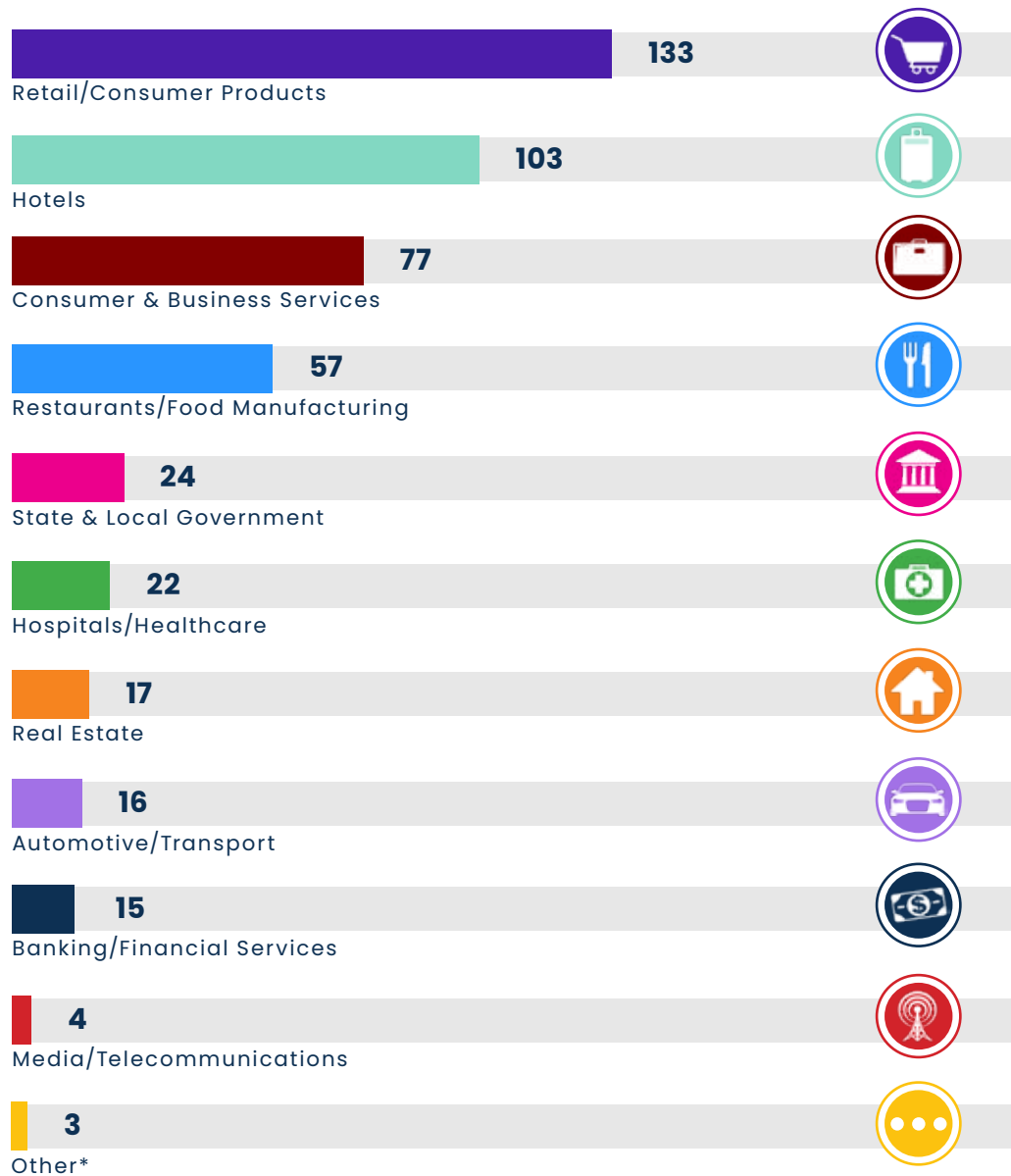
ADA TITLE III WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY LAWSUITS IN FEDERAL COURT (2017-2018)

- 2017: 814
- 2018: 2258 (177% increase over 2017)
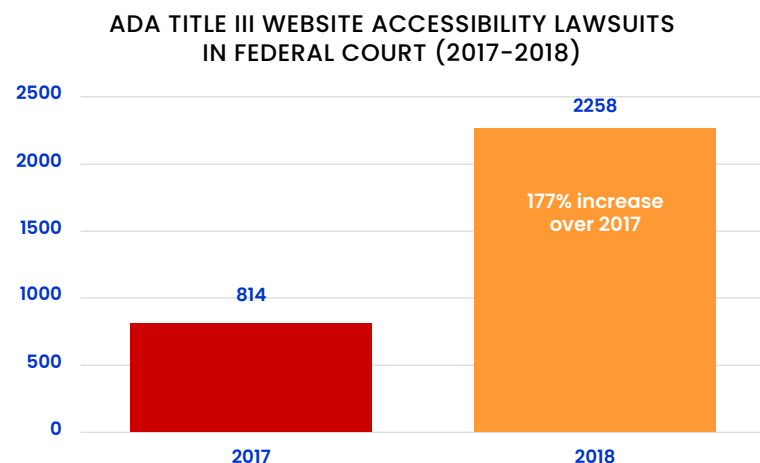
YOU MAY HAVE HEARD of notable web accessibility lawsuits like Gil v. Winn-Dixie Supermarket or Markett v. Five Guys Enterprises and may be thinking that your business is relatively small and thus your website's inaccessibility will go unnoticed by potential consumers, but this is not the case! Between July and September 2018, there were over 470 digital accessibility lawsuits, and 72% of lawsuits during this time were composed of three industries: retail/consumer products, hotels, and consumer/business services.[5] The average legal cost of website accessibility lawsuits for small businesses is more than $50,000 and the settlement cost of a recent case was $6,000,000.[6] Essentially, your business- no matter what type or size- is not exempt from costly litigations if your website is inaccessible.

ADA LAWSUITS IN Q3

2018 – JULY TO SEPTEMBER

BREAKDOWN BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Lawsuits
Retail/Consumer Products	133
Hotels	103
Consumer & Business Services	77
Restaurants/Food Manufacturing	57
State & Local Government	24
Hospitals/Healthcare	22
Real Estate	17
Automotive/Transport	16
Banking/Financial Services	15
Media/Telecommunications	4
Other*	3

You can save yourself the money, time, and inconvenience that a lawsuit would cost by acting now to make your website accessible. Don't become a business hindered by web accessibility litigations – use the information you learn in this guide to be proactive and protect your business.

INCREASED AUDIENCE REACH

Having an accessible website benefits your business by increasing your audience reach to aging and/or disabled populations. The aging population is growing, and the number of people who have disabilities is much higher than you might think. Here are a few notable statistics:

61 million or 1 in 4 American adults has a disability that significantly impacts their life.

Americans older than 65 years old will outnumber American children for the first time in history by 2030.

The number of Americans older than 65 will double within the next 41 years, increasing from 46 to 98 million.

Many aging people struggle with declining vision and hearing, even though they might not be categorized as having a disability. Your website should reflect the needs and changes of these populations so more people can connect with your business. Having an accessible website will also give you a competitive advantage over companies that do not have accessible websites.

IMPROVED SEO

Making your website accessible is a great way to improve your search engine optimization (SEO)- a method of increasing quality traffic to your website. Screen readers and search engine spiders examine the pages on your website in similar ways. So, modifying the code and content on your website for screen readers and other assistive technologies optimizes your website, making it easier for search engine spiders to understand what your website is about. This gives you better placement on organic search results pages, which can then increase the amount of quality visitors on your website.

IMPROVED USABILITY FOR ALL USERS

Creating an accessible website is not just about preventing lawsuits or improving the SEO of your business, it is about helping others. An accessible website is easier to use for all people, and it provides everyone with an equal opportunity to purchase or learn more about your products and/or services. Here are a few examples of how accessibility can help users:

Clearer content descriptions Easier for people both using and not using a screen reader to understand what you are talking about

Alternative text to images Useful for people who use screen readers and for people whose images fail to load because of poor internet connection

Closed captions on videos Beneficial for someone who is deaf and for people who are in locations where they can't play sound or don't have headphones

MAKE YOUR WEBSITE ACCESSIBLE

You can make your website accessible starting today. Here are the steps you need to take.

ADD A WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

1

A web accessibility statement is brief paragraph describing your effort and commitment in working towards developing an accessible website. You should put your statement in the footer of your website near your privacy policy. This statement should also include your contact information and a feedback mechanism so that:

Site visitors can report accessibility issues.

You can obtain information regarding the issues and/or perform the function that was inaccessible on the website for the site visitor.

You can arrange for a follow-up response.

PERFORM A REVIEW TEST

2

You can perform a basic website review test by using free browser plugins to test individual site pages. Due to underlying code templates, many issues reoccur on similar web pages, so you should focus on reviewing key pages and process types. These include ecommerce checkout processes for online retailers and community/model pages for home builders. Consider investing in professional automatic site scanning software and using our services at Blue Tangerine.

CREATE A CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY

3

Unlike the first two steps in this process, creating a culture of accessibility and making your website accessible is not a one-time project updated yearly by a single individual. Instead, accessibility is an ongoing mindset and process that must be constantly addressed by your entire company- not just the web development team.

Every team or sector within your company must be aware of and comply to the additional requirements to make your website accessible. To get everyone on-board with your accessibility efforts, identify new content creation tasks and assign people responsibilities for these tasks. For example:

Content Development Team

Create content & headings that are clear & provide captions to videos

Design Team

Provide high quality graphics & make sure color contrast complies to standards

Web Development Team

Ensure forms have labels & table markup is correct

CREATING A CULTURE
OF ACCESSIBILITY ALSO INCLUDES

1 PERFORMING REGULAR SCANNING & MONITORING PROCESSES

Schedule regular website accessibility reviews and monitor your website

Keep up with accessibility issues reported by customers

Consider investing in professional site scanning software that routinely reviews your website

2 REVIEWING & UPDATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & PROCESSES

Review the time and expenditures used for accessibility and allocate resources and budget as needed

Add accessibility as a requirement for any web-based tools purchased from third party vendors

Ensure that your SEO agency understands web accessibility and recognizes its importance

Document your policies and internal compliance efforts in case lawsuits arise

BLUE TANGERINE
CAN HELP YOU

At Blue Tangerine, web accessibility is something we are passionate about. We are continually improving the accessibility of our own website to help all our users- including you. We know that beginning the web accessibility process can sometimes be an overwhelming endeavor, so we want to make things easier for you. We provide in-depth accessibility reviews that explain your website's accessibility issues. To take advantage of this review, and learn more about website accessibility, please contact us today.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Contact the Blue Tangerine team today to learn more about website accessibility reviews and full-service solutions.

ABOUT BLUE TANGERINE

Blue Tangerine is your website design, development and digital marketing agency all rolled into one – from mobile responsive websites, SEO, PPC and Geofencing to email and social media, providing full-service solutions to home builders, online retailers, and businesses.

1   https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/
2   https://www.3playmedia.com/2018/10/15/web-accessibility-lawsuits/
3   https://www.3playmedia.com/2018/10/15/web-accessibility-lawsuits/
4   https://www.adatitleiii.com/2019/01/number-of-federal-website-accessibility-lawsuits-nearly-triple-exceeding-2250-in-2018/
5   https://accessibility.dev/470-digital-accessibility-cases-were-filed-in-q3-2018/
6   https://adasitecompliance.com/
7   https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0816-disability.html
8   https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/cb18-41-population-projections.html
9   https://www.prb.org/aging-unitedstates-fact-sheet/

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