

Chapter 11

Digital Accessibility in the Professional Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Navigating the global workforce includes understanding digital accessibility and how it impacts people. The chapter begins by defining digital accessibility and its relevance in the modern workplace, dispelling some myths about those with disabilities. The chapter dives into the legal requirements of electronic accessibility and provides step-by-step instructions on electronic accessibility. The chapter ends with a review of common challenges, key take aways and a list of on-line resources. Accessibility must become habit so that it is part of what you do every day in everything that you do.

INTRODUCTION

Over 70 million people - that is how many adults in the United States have reported having a disability (CDC 2024a). This number doesn't include those that chose not to report, those that have "slowed down" due to age, or many that have temporary disabilities such as broken bones, pregnancy, medical treatments with serious side effects, or disabilities that do not often require medical attention such as having colorblindness.

Whether an employee is responsible for communicating internally within an organization or externally to the public or to customers, understanding how to provide barrier-free communications is crucial. In other words, be sure that employees are not discriminating against those with disabilities. Failure to be accessible can impact

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-5322-7.ch011

the growth/retention of customers and, for those legally required to be accessible, can expose the business or agency to legal action.

What is Digital Accessibility?

Let's break this down into what is "digital" and what is "accessibility".

Digital Resources: A resource is digital if it is shared electronically. Digital resources require the use of a computer, smart phone, tablet or other equipment with a graphic user interface. Different states have different acronyms for digital resources. The Texas Administrative Code uses the acronym EIR – Electronic and Information Resources while the federal government uses the acronym ICT – Information and Communication Technology. For this textbook, we will use the phrase "digital resources" and it is synonymous with EIR and ICT.

Common examples of digital resources in the workplace include:

- Websites
- Emails (including Outlook)
- PDFs
- PowerPoint, Word or Excel files
- Social Media Postings
- On-line Advertising, including job postings
- On-line Platforms; and
- Software, including Software as a Service.

Accessibility: Equal access to information, without barriers.

It really is just that simple. When an email is sent, provide all the information in that email to everyone. Some items to consider are:

- If someone has colorblindness, is there sufficient color contrast so they can also see all the information?
- If someone is blind, is the content formatted so that a screen reader will provide all the same information?
- If someone is deaf, will they see all the same information?
- If someone doesn't use a mouse, can they navigate the content?

The good news is that being accessible isn't difficult. But good habits must be developed and always keep accessibility a priority.

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