Survey Reveals Growing Consumer Interest in Digital Accessibility

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Four Drivers Behind Equitable User Access

A recent survey sponsored by CapTech demonstrated the increased value consumers place on digital accessibility. Of the nearly 500 people surveyed, a majority are willing to pay more for products that ensure access to all. In this post we explore the survey's results and define four drivers behind the growing concern for equitable user experiences.

By definition, digital accessibility strives to make content and products usable to as many people as possible, including those with disabilities. But our survey shows that consumer interest goes beyond usage or disability. Responses reveal deeper values, such as availability and reputation.

Key findings from CapTech's Inclusivity, Accessibility, and Social Responsibility Survey:

51% of consumers are willing to pay more to companies committed to digital accessibility and **41% are willing to pay up to 10% more**

45% of respondents feel digital accessibility is more important than the availability of the company's products or services

Gen Z consumers are **more likely to prioritize a company's reputation** or alignment to personal values over digital accessibility

Our survey shows that accessibility investments are reflected in brand reputation. Accessibility isn't just an obligation or requirement; it's a foundational concern for any customer-centered businesses. And it's the reason we talk about 'shifting left' and inclusivity by design.

Serving More Customers (Where They Are)

Websites and products should adapt to the needs and preferences of their users, rather than expecting users to adapt to the product. It's important to remember that it's not just those users who identify as disabled that use assistive technology and accessibility features. All users benefit from accessibility.

25% of survey respondents self-identified as disabled, which reflects global estimates that one billion people, or 15% of the world population, experience a disability.

25% → **15**%
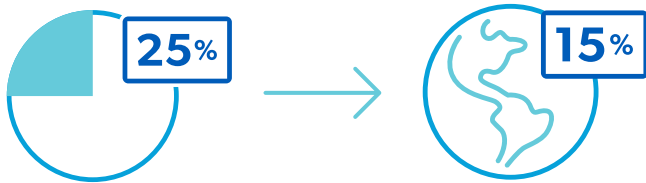
Forrester recently demonstrated that collectively persons with disabilities have $1.2 trillion in annual disposable income, representing real market value. However, none of these statistics include people with temporary or situational disabilities.

$1.2 TRILLION

When people think about disabilities, what comes to mind are permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss. But everyone experiences a situational disability at some point. For example, when you're in a loud restaurant, or maybe in a quiet library trying to watch a video without your headphones, closed captions come to the rescue. With the right tools and practices, your site can meet everyone's needs at all times.

Business Risk and Compliance

Risk and compliance are driving many accessibility decisions. Recent developments within the courts bring increased risks to businesses. For example, the Department of Justice recently published guidance that digital experiences, like company websites, are extensions of 'public interaction' defined within the ADA. This upped the ante, so many more organizations are thinking about regulations.

Over the last five years, litigation over web accessibility has been steadily growing. **In 2020 alone, digital accessibility cases rose by 50%** over the previous year and that trend continued.

Recently, these cases have gone to the highest court. In Robles v. Domino's Pizza the Supreme Court affirmed that a website must be treated as a place of public accommodation. Considering that **97% of the most visited websites do not meet WCAG 2.0 standards,** it's easy to see why more businesses and consumers have turned their attention to equitable user access.

97%

"Websites and products should adapt to the needs and preferences of their users, rather than expecting users to adapt to the product."

Matt Leahy, Inclusive Design Manager at CapTech Consulting

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⚠ Increased Awareness of Digital Channels

The pandemic brought significant change; going to physical stores was no longer an option for many. This brought accessibility issues to light as people were forced into digital channels. This led to organizations needing to make sure people had equal access and the ability to participate or complete their tasks.

In recent surveys, **73% of consumers feel that COVID-19 raised awareness of the accessibility of their digital channels,** including remote work options along with product availability.

In fact, many of the web accessibility litigation cases discussed above were filed during the pandemic. Some companies have not responded well to increased scrutiny, which is why many of the survey respondents feel accessibility should be a measure of company reputation.
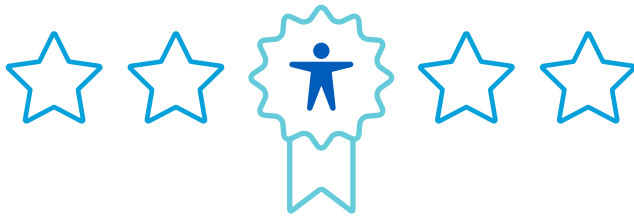
4TH DRIVER

### ✦ Proactive Inclusivity with a Greater Voice

There appears to be more focus and emphasis on making sure organizations are being inclusive. The number of diversity, equality, and inclusion programs have significantly increased; employee resource groups ensure that all audiences are being better served. Often, people with disabilities are the forgotten audience, but in digital channels, there are more opportunities for people to make their voice heard.

Recent reports show that **83% of U.S. companies now have diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) programs.** Over a third of these programs took their first actions in 2021.
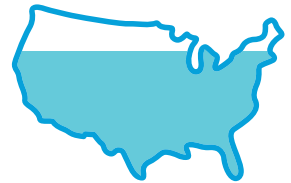
Many DEI programs focus on human resources, recruiting, and compensation—while accessibility can often be an afterthought. But as the survey shows, consumers feel digital accessibility is an important part of inclusion.

This is why CapTech takes a different approach; to help ensure every voice is heard, our Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Council includes an accessibility liaison for every decision.
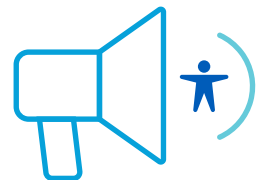
Become Savvy About Access

Whatever reason a business pursues accessibility, it's ultimately a positive thing. The survey shows that people are seeing a strong business case for accessibility, and it's something about which consumers are becoming more savvy.

Whether your organization is focused on reaching a wider audience or needs to comply with regulations, today we are all more aware of digital accessibility and want to provide accommodations for every user. Accessible experiences need more than alt text or third-party tools. Ensuring every user can find what they need on your site requires a combination of knowledge and technical expertise.

"Accessibility isn't just an obligation or requirement. It's a foundational concern for any customer-centered businesses."

Virginia Booth, User Experience Director at CapTech Consulting

Virginia Booth
User Experience Director

Virginia has over 10 years experience as a UX Team Lead and Architect, collaborating with all project roles from brief through launch. At CapTech, Virginia leads teams to clean and accessible interfaces with best-in-class user experiences.

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Matt Leahy
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Matt is an impactful design leader with over 10 years of experience. He is passionate and knowledgeable about web accessibility, UX and usability, and device-agnostic, responsive design. Matt combines a strategic mindset, a keen eye for visual design, and a strong depth of experience in front-end development.

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