

IBM Accessibility Facebook Expert Hour on Accessible Business Communications Transcript 02/15/2012

[IBM Accessibility](#) Greetings everyone. Welcome to the February IBM Accessibility Expert Hour and thank you for joining us. Our topic today is "Accessible Business Communications". Please welcome our experts: Andrew Kirkpatrick from Adobe Systems and Susann Keohane from the IBM Human Ability and Accessibility Center.

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[IBM Accessibility](#) If this is your first Facebook Expert Hour, here's how it works: To participate in the real-time Q&A session, "Like" IBM Accessibility (the Like button is at the top of the page in the center). Then to ask a question, type it into the box on your screen that says, "Write something..." and press Enter. Our experts will answer your question as a Comment, and it will show up underneath your question.

[Satoko Shiina](#) likes this.

If you're using a screenreader, we suggest using Facebook's HTML-only mode:

<http://m.facebook.com/home.php>

[IBM Accessibility](#) Please remember to refresh occasionally -- sometimes Facebook has trouble keeping up with the pace of our Expert Hours.

[IBM Accessibility](#) Okay, let's open the wall for questions. :-)

[Jim Lawrence](#) likes this.

[Spencer Hunley](#) What types of facilitated communication should businesses - especially small ones - be knowledgeable of and/or incorporate into their own communications?

[Susann Keohane](#) by facilitated, do you mean transcription service? Or general guidelines to make meetings more accessible?

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) Understanding that a variety of communications mechanisms may be needed is important. You may receive calls from relay services supporting deaf or hard of hearing customers, but providing a chat interface for end users may also be useful to end users. In addition, of course, providing accessible documents and web sites is critical for business communication.

[1 person](#) likes this.

[Spencer Hunley](#) @ Susann: Both, actually - to narrow it down, basically when addressing customer communications.

[Susann Keohane](#) As Andrew noted, it is important to create accessible documentation. On our website, we provide an easy to follow checklist that you can use to create accessible content:

<http://www-03.ibm.com/able/guidelines/documentation/accessdoc.html>

[1 person](#) likes this.

[Andi Snow-Weaver](#) And to reiterate Andrew's point - providing multiple channels for customers to contact you is important - phone, e-mail, and online chat.

[Tina Lannin](#) Accessibility also means online realtime captions for many deaf and hard of hearing people. <http://omalleycommunications.co.uk/>

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[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) To Tina's point, Adobe Connect is our web conference tool and it supports realtime captioning.

[Marc Johlic](#) Hi folks! Great topic - as we all deal with business communications daily! To that end, I have a question regarding PDFs. I've heard that PDF documents are just images. How can these images be made accessible?

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) PDF originally was just like a "painting" of a document or page. However, as of over 10 years ago the PDF format was extended to include the addition of an underlying structure called tags. The tags contain information about the structure and content of the document, including equivalents for images and other accessibility info. So a PDF document is not just an image. Thanks for the softball question, Mark! :)

[1 person](#) likes this.

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) For images within a PDF document - they can be made accessible by providing alternative text just like with HTML. In PDF the alternative text is provided along with the tags. There is a technique to describe more about this at <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20-TECHS/pdf.html#PDF1>

[1 person](#) likes this.

[Fran Hayden](#) It looks like I'm piling on Marc's question, but I'm interested in addressing Andrew too! At Adobe, you've been good about including ways to ensure accessibility of PDF documents into your development tools - what's your latest product line, versions, and any updates we should know about?

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) Fran, we're working on a new version of Acrobat now, and while I can't provide details publicly about what we are planning to incorporate, I can share that we have heard from many people that they want the process to be easier and to provide better support for users who are less familiar with accessibility. I believe that these are good goals in general for all authoring tools, but I hope that we can make some useful improvements in Acrobat in coming versions.

[1 person](#) likes this.

[Fran Hayden](#) Andrew - thanks! As always, making the process easier and having support for people who are less familiar with accessibility will be good - for customer satisfaction, AND for advancing the "cause" of accessible business communications. THANKS!!!

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[2 people](#) like this.

[Marnie Hoover](#) I was wondering, for presentation software, what is the one thing I can do that will make the most impact on the accessibility of my presentation?

[Fran Hayden](#) likes this.

[Fran Hayden](#) Maybe the expert panel can also give best practices/one best thing we can do with documents, e-mails, calendar invites etc. - any other business communications vehicle.

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[Susann Keohane](#) The one thing you can do is to implement the best practices for creating accessible presentations. As you can imagine if you simply add alt text to images but not address navigation then it still renders the presentation inaccessible.

[Susann Keohane](#) Here's some links that may be of help:

(1) http://www-03.ibm.com/able/news/accessible_presentations.html

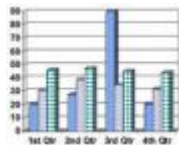
[Susann Keohane](#) Documentation checklist covers techniques for creating accessible presentations: <http://www-03.ibm.com/able/guidelines/documentation/accessdoc.html>

[Fran Hayden](#) Susanne - Specifically...Does the checklist cover document creation as well presentations? If not, what is the one biggest thing I can do that will make the most impact on the accessibility of my document?

[Susann Keohane](#) For emails and meeting invitations, you may find helpful our article on How to design your meeting and include everyone: http://www-03.ibm.com/able/news/accessible_meetings.html

[Andi Snow-Weaver](#) One of the most common errors I see in e-mail and presentations is that people will use text or symbols in a different color to mean something. There are many techniques for providing the information programmatically so that screen reader users will get it but you have to also provide a redundant visual cue for those users who are not using assistive technology but may not be able to discern the color differences.

[Andi Snow-Weaver](#) For some techniques on using color see <http://www-03.ibm.com/able/guidelines/documentation/docaccformat.html#1.3>



[IBM Human Ability and Accessibility Center | Developer guidelines](#)

Some users may not be able to access documentation if it is not in an accessible format.

[Mary Clark](#) I'm coming in after the fact, but as one who is hearing impaired, it is important that the presentations are not all dark, and require lights off. People with hearing loss will find the presentation a lot more accessible if the lights can be left on in a meeting room for example, or if "text" or "notes" are enabled. My preference is a very light background, and strong dark, plain text (not cutesy fonts).

[IBM Accessibility](#) Great point, Mary.

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[Christopher Phillips](#) Here is another document from w3c to complement the IBM guidelines titled How to make presentations accessible to all <http://www.w3.org/WAI/training/accessible>

[How to Make Presentations Accessible to All](#)

Do you remember a time when people around you broke out in laughter, but you didn't hear the joke? Be careful not to leave out information for some people in your audience. For example, if you say "you can read it on the slide", you are probably excluding people who cannot see the slide.

[IBM Accessibility](#) Thanks, Christopher. :-)

[Hitesh Patel](#) With PDFs is there a recommended workflow to retain the work invested in making a PDF accessible? Since a PDF is not a source document, the next time the PDF is created (say from a Word document) any changes made to the PDF are lost

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) The first thing to keep in mind is that you want to keep as much of the accessibility information available in the source file as possible. For a simple word processing document it is possible to have all of the information in the source file so there is no repair needed to the resulting PDF. On the other end of the spectrum, a PDF that starts as a scanned document will need complete repair. It is definitely a source of frustration when you do a lot of work to repair a document and the author needs to add a paragraph which means you have to start over.

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) This is the main reason that we've been working to add accessibility improvements to InDesign and Acrobat so a greater amount of the necessary work is handled in the source file.

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) InDesign CS5.5 made major improvements in this area.
<http://adobe.com/accessibility/products/indesign>

[Delray Beach Athletic Club](#) When designing documents that will be exclusively web-based, what are some best practices to ensure this content is accessible?

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) The WCAG techniques are the best place to start for compliance with WCAG 2.0. There are techniques for various technologies, including PDF, HTML, and others.
<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20-TECHS/>
[1 person](#) likes this.

[Delray Beach Athletic Club](#) Thanks for that answer! Appreciate it.

[T.m. Weissenberger](#) I have a question on image equivalency--one of our customers asserts that several of the images in her site are only "eye-candy" and don't require ALT text (or, can use alt=""). But a couple of these images seem like good candidates for ALT text: a picture of the person delivering the welcome message to the site, for instance, or the universal accessibility icon. Is there a prevailing theory on when images require ALT and when they do not?

[Fran Hayden](#) This is a great question!!!

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[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) It requires judgment, and you can be assured that not everyone will agree. My colleague Matt May suggests that if it takes more time to argue against adding alt text than it does to add alt text, then just add it and save yourself some time.

[1 person](#) likes this.

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) If you have a universal accessibility icon on your site and don't provide alternative text you're inviting criticism. The icon is there to convey meaning, and that meaning likely being that the site owner cares about accessibility, so alt is required.

[Susann Keohane](#) Use your best judgment. It's important to add alt text to images that provide meaning to your content. Unlike eye-candy, someone using a screen reader does not benefit from superfluous information that may distract from the main content.

[T.m. Weissenberger](#) Susann, good point. This is what's driving the issue--certainly we don't want to force a JAWS or NVDA or VoiceOver user to wade through a pile of unnecessary information. On the other hand, we don't want to omit something of relevance.

[Susann Keohane](#) When in doubt I would provide alt text.

[Phill Jenkins](#) In my opinion, we need the end user groups to take responsibility and propose a standard. NFB, AFB, Lighthouse, IBU, etc. - could they propose definitive guidance and best practices?

[IBM Accessibility](#) Please remember to refresh. :-)

[IBM Accessibility](#) Andrew, here's a question for you. Who "owns" the PDF format? And what's going on with Open Source formats?

[Satoko Shiina](#) likes this.

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) PDF was submitted to ISO in January 2007, and ISO 32000, the formal specification for PDF 1.7, was made a final standard in 2008. The spec is open to implementation by third parties, and is presently under development under the ISO process, with a number of organizations shepherding its progress. Adobe has also made available any patents it controls that are necessary to implement PDF on a royalty-free basis.

http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=51502

http://www.adobe.com/devnet/pdf/pdf_reference.html

[Delray Beach Athletic Club](#) Can PDF documents meet Section 508 and WCAG 2.0 accessibility standards?

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) Yes. The W3C has also published techniques for PDF and WCAG 2.0 at <http://www.w3.org/WAI/GL/WCAG20-TECHS/pdf.html>

A new standard specifically for PDF accessibility, PDF/UA, has been shown to support the ability to create PDF files that comply with both Section 508 and the WCAG 2.0 Accessibility standards. Tagging, read order, and structure, facilitate this.

I wrote a blog post that details the support for WCAG 2.0 through the new PDF techniques at <http://blogs.adobe.com/accessibility/2012/01/wcag-2-0-techniques-for-pdf.html>

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[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) PDF/UA: <http://pdf.editme.com/PDFUA>

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) All PDF WCAG 2.0 techniques: <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20-TECHS/pdf.html>

[Delray Beach Athletic Club](#) THANK YOU!

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) I should add that PDF/UA (ISO 14289) is a draft international standard. 14289 also tackles the issue of compliant viewers.

[Missouri Assistive Technology](#) We are working on a fillable accessible form with Adobe Acrobat X Pro. Draft feedback indicates that the screen reader (Jaws) has difficulty reading what has been entered into the form field. What do you suggest for resources to get past this?

[Andrew Kirkpatrick](#) That's a hard question to answer remotely. I know that screen readers like JAWS do read the form field contents, but there are questions about version of JAWS (are you using a _very_ old version?) and version of Reader (ditto). Have you tried the same document with NVDA or another screen reader?

[Missouri Assistive Technology](#) Thanks for entertaining it! It is the latest version of Jaws and the latest on the reader. We have also tried the built in Read out Loud (works great!) and Window Eyes (Not so great).

[Pete Brunet](#) I'd suggest a test with NVDA. I've found it to be free of significant errors on a a11y implementation under development (with some minor issues). If you have a staff member quite skilled in the MSAA interface also consider AccProbe.
[1 person](#) likes this.

[Missouri Assistive Technology](#) Thank you Andrew and Pete.

[Pete Brunet](#) s/a/an/

[Pete Brunet](#) The comment about MSAA/AccProbe assumes that AAXPro uses it. Maybe Andrew can comment on that.

[IBM Accessibility](#) We are now at the end of our time. What a great session -- I want to thank our experts, Andrew & Susann for joining us today. :-)

[IBM Accessibility](#) The session will remain on the Facebook wall, and there will be a transcript available on the ibm.com/able website soon. www-03.ibm.com

[Yoshiko Sasaki](#) likes this.

[IBM Accessibility](#) Have a wonderful day/evening! :-)