How to make your communications inclusive

'Inclusivity' is about ensuring equity of access to opportunity and resources for people who may otherwise be excluded, such as people who have physical or mental difficulties, or who belong to other minority groups. So inclusion should be at the start of every process an organisation undertakes.

1. Who is your audience?

- Are you using the appropriate communication channels for your audience? Do you need to use multiple channels? A 'communication channel' is a means of communication that is available to an organisation or individual, for example meetings, conversations, events, documentation, graphics (e.g. posters), audio, video, publications and social media.
- When using written channels, is the language and text type appropriate? Are you following accessible guidelines (text types, sizes, colours, etc.) to suit your target audience?
- Asking for regular feedback from your audience will ensure the messaging and channels you're using remain relevant. Consider how you can gain this feedback.

2. What is your message?

- Will your message reach a wide enough audience?
- Is the language open and inclusive?
- Will anyone be negatively impacted by your message? Will it make anyone feel excluded or will it empower?
- Is it in plain English?
- Make it simple - not overly long or complex, remove jargon and acronyms.

What is your message? (continued)

- Are technical terms included, are they necessary and do they need any explanation?
- Is there an audio version of the message?
- Can people change the font or background colours or be given braille versions to suit their needs?
- Is there an 'easy read' version accessible for people with learning disabilities.
- Not everyone can use a touchscreen, keyboard or mouse so all functions and responses need to work in all formats.

3. Are you using the right format?

- Technology
- Paper
- In person

Specific guidelines for different types of communication

1. Written documents

- Minimum 12 point font.
- Use sans serif options - Calibri, Veranda and Arial, etc.
- Use numerals rather than words for numbers (1 not one).
- Enable people to change the background or text colours to adjust the contrast.
- Colour choice - try not to use red and green together, as this is hard to read for people with colour vision deficiency (also known as colour blindness).

2. Images and films

- Are they inclusive?
- Do they represent your audience in a positive and realistic way?
- Alt text - are there captions or audio descriptors for people that use screen readers?
- Have you enabled captions or subtitles? (Hearing loss is the most common congenital disability)
- Is the audio clear and not too crowded?

3. Alternative formats

- Audio
- Easy read
- Braille
- Large print
- Make it easy for people to know that other formats are available – provide links to convert your pages, communications or contact information where people can request other formats.

Assistive technology

Assistive technology is everywhere. From devices in our homes - 'Alexa, turn the lights on', to touchscreens and automatic doors.

Ensuring you have the right balance of assistive technology in your business allows both individuals and businesses to flourish, as it removes any barriers.

Assistive technology in the workplace encompasses a huge range of products and services, from footrests, standing desks and RSI mice, to voice recognition software and touchscreens, enabling people to focus on the job and let their talents shine through.

A SeeAbility case study of inclusive technology at its best

Here is just a glimpse into the world of one of our Eye Care Champions, Wayne Chapman, who has been blind since birth, showing the technology he has used throughout his career.

"I use a PC laptop with the help of access technology. In order for me to gain access to what is on screen, whether it is a message, icon or something I type, I use a program called JAWS, which stands for Job Access With Speech. This allows me to hear onscreen content via a synthetic voice. Please note, it is not like Dragon Dictate, which means you have to speak to the computer. In addition, I use a braille display, which sits in front of the main standard PC keyboard. This is connected to the computer via USB and allows me to have access to onscreen info under my fingertips. Therefore, with the speech letting me know what I am typing as I am typing it, and the braille helping me read information to people on the phone or assisting me with checking layout and in general how things look, I am able to work as well as someone who can see.

Additionally, for taking notes at meetings or delivering presentations, I use an electronic braille notetaker called the Braille Sense Polaris. This is kind of a mini laptop, but it is much more portable, as it is all in the same unit with the braille keyboard.

SEE**ABILITY**

All the above equipment was paid for by the Government's Access to Work scheme, who I applied to before starting my role at SeeAbility. I have used similar equipment via Access to Work throughout my working life.

In terms of mobile phone technology, both for work purposes and personally, I use an iPhone. The good thing about Apple products is that they have all the accessibility technology built in. It just needs to be activated. The iPhone has software called Voiceover. Like JAWS for the computer, it speaks everything onscreen, including phone numbers, text messages, emails, info on apps, and so on."

Read more from Microsoft using the link below on the technologies they've developed in their software.

www.microsoft.com/accessibility

When it comes to a specific individual's needs, no two people or workplaces are the same and each situation may require a bespoke approach. The information from AbilityNet, at the link below, will help you to understand more about the reasonable adjustments you can make.

www.bit.ly/AbilityEmployment

SEE ABILITY

Access to Work support

Most reasonable adjustments are common sense and very low cost. However, should the individual require additional assistance, government funding is available with the Access to Work scheme. If the application is made less than six weeks into work and approved, the scheme will fund 100% of the cost (up to a limit).

The process needs to be started by the individual, by applying for an Access to Work assessment via the DWP website, but our supported employment coaches can offer support to help get this process started.

Watch a video explaining Access to Work
www.bit.ly/AccessWork

The government website to apply for Access to Work
www.gov.uk/access-to-work

A government factsheet on Access to Work
www.bit.ly/AccessWorkEmployers

For more information on taking the next steps to becoming a more inclusive employer, please contact us by emailing RWA@seeability.org

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