

Meet Jacob

Posted on February 4, 2014 by [Whitney Quesenbery \(http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/\)](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/) | [Leave a comment](#)

Jacob is one of the personas from our book, *A Web for Everyone* (<http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/>). It can be hard to think about using the web in ways that are different from your own experience. These personas helped us think about all the different people who are served by innovative, accessible, universal design.

You can download an overview of all eight personas from our [Resources page \(http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/\)](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/). The personas images, created by Tom Biby, [twofinechaps.com \(http://twofinechaps.com/\)](http://twofinechaps.com/), are available on Flickr. Tune in for a new persona every Tuesday until all eight are posted.

Jacob: Blind paralegal and a bit of a geek



The right technology lets me do anything.

Jacob is a paralegal in a large law firm. He reviews cases and writes summaries, cross-referencing them to the firm's own cases and clients. He's building expertise in his area of law and is hoping to go to law school in a year or so.

As far as Jacob is concerned, it's the technology that's handicapped, not him. When everything is in place, he can work just as fast and just as effectively as anyone in his office.

He's a bit of a gadget geek, always trying out new tools, looking for a little edge and something new. The last few years have been a lot of fun with all the new apps, and VoiceOver on his Mac and phone lets him use most of them pretty well. He likes the challenge of learning new tools.

His other challenge is running. He's training for a 10K run, running with a club in his neighborhood and using an app to plan his routes and track his distance.

He's just started to use The iPhone app, Passbook, and uses it to get train tickets and other travel. The regional rail system has an app, so he can just pull up the barcode and scan it at the ticket office. No fumbling for the right printed card—total independence. Same phone as

everyone. Same app as everyone, and it all just works.

This makes it possible to do my job

Jacob relies on sites and apps that are built well, in this story from Chapter 4. “They say that on the Internet, no one knows who you are. That’s really true for me. I think there are people in my company who don’t know I’m blind—they only see me through email or the case summaries I write. When a site works with my screen reader, I have control over my own experience. I can preview the content on the page by listening to all the headings on the page. I’m confident I know I’m putting the right information in the right field on a form. Best of all, I’m no different from anyone else—and I’m faster than some of my co-workers, if you want to know the truth.

“When a website is not accessible, or I run into broken links or forms, it’s really frustrating. Sometimes I miss important information because it’s hidden from my screen reader. Or I have to spend a lot of time figuring out what’s going on. I just want to be able to do things for myself, and when sites are broken, I can’t.”

“Seeing color”

A good app can provide information Jacob need. Like color. “You might wonder why a blind person needs to know about colors. I can put labels in my clothes so I don’t end up with clashing colors, but sometimes I need to know what color something is, like when someone tells me to get the “red folder.” One of the coolest apps I’ve found recently lets me point my phone’s camera at anything and then it reads the color name back to me. Is that a red pepper or a green pepper? It’s a whole new kind of independence. That’s a practical use, but I learned about this app from an article that had this poetic description of walking around a garden hearing all the different colors described. He called it mind-blowing. I agree.”

Snapshot of Jacob

- 32 years old
- College graduate, legal training courses
- Shares an apartment with a friend
- Paralegal, reviews cases and writes case summaries
- Laptop, braille display, iPhone

The A’s: Ability, Aptitude, Attitude

- **Ability:** Blind since birth with some light perception
- **Aptitude:** Skilled technology user
- **Attitude:** Digital native, early adopter, persists until he gets it

Assistive Technology

- Screen reader (JAWS on his laptop, VoiceOver on his phone)
- Audio recorder (to take notes)
- Braille display

The Bigger Picture

Source: World Health Organization, Census

- People with visual disabilities make up about 2.6% of the world’s population (about 0.6% are blind).
- In the U.S., about 1.8 million people can’t easily see printed words.
- Only about 10% of people who are blind can read and write braille.

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