Section 508 and Usability

presented by
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General Services Administration
Office of Governmentwide Policy

Office of Information, Integrity, & Access

Helping federal leaders tackle their IT and policy challenges

FICAM

Protecting and confirming identity and access to federal systems and buildings

SECTION508

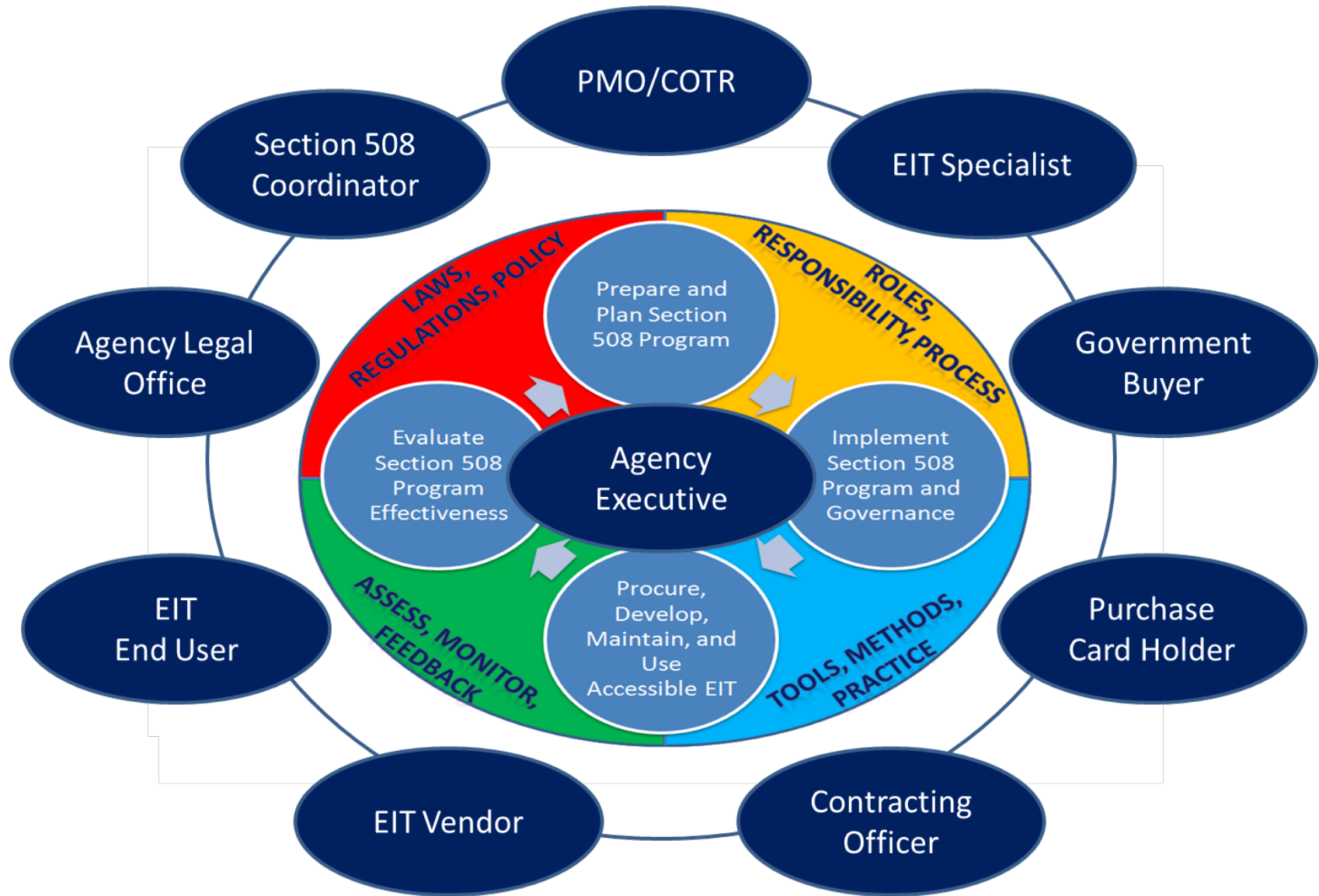Technical assistance to ensure accessibility of IT

DOTGOV

Domain registration, management and security for all federal domains

SHAREDSERVICES

Improving access to shared services through support to agencies and use of a data catalogue

Section 508 Ecosystem

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act

- December 2000 amendment to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act

- Enacted to:

  - Eliminate barriers to information technology

  - New opportunities for persons with disabilities

  - Encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals

- Section 508 mandated GSA and the Access Board to provide technical assistance to the Federal Government

Who - Section 508 applies to all Federal Departments and Agencies and the US Postal Service

What - All EIT that is "**procured, maintained, developed, or used**"

Section 508 applies to ALL EIT contract vehicles and procurement actions, including micro-purchases.

The Human Side – Why 508 Matters

Section 508 is about doing the right thing to provide equal access to information technology for Federal employees and members of the public.

•A blind employee relies on assistive technology, as well as accessible web applications to do his job.

•Section 508 benefits Service Disabled Veterans who are entering the Federal workforce in record numbers by providing job opportunities with accessible environments

•Section 508 benefits persons with disabilities who work for or are seeking employment with the Federal government by providing an accessible workplace

Disability Employment Shows Improvement

- The number of Americans with disabilities who are employed is on the rise, according to new data from the U.S. Department of Labor.

- The agency's monthly jobs report indicates that unemployment among those with disabilities dipped to 9.3 percent in June, an improvement over the 10.1 percent recorded the month prior. (Disability Scoop)

Why is Accessibility Important?

- More then a billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability, with is about 15% of the worlds population.

- The number of people with disabilities is growing as national populations grow older and global chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, increase.

- People are working longer so the chance of having a disability in the workplace is increasing

- Using digital technologies can be a problem not just for the visually impaired but a much wider section of the community. Hearing impairment, dementia, arthritis, attention deficit disorder, and dyslexia are just some of the conditions that can make it hard for people to utilize the Web.

- By making websites and digital technologies accessible, we help to create an inclusive environment for people with a disability. Accessible websites enable people to make independent decisions, and provide greater opportunity for participation, interaction, education and employment.

Change is Coming

- In February, 2015, the Access Board published the Section 508 NPRM in the *Federal Register* for public comment. Comments are were due by May 28 and are being reviewed.

- AdHoc working group September

- Final rule in 2016

You are at Risk

- **Lawsuits are becoming more common** - Since 2001, 140 administrative complaints and 7 civil actions had been filed against Agencies over Section 508. 2012 DoJ report

- **It is not just lawsuits** – "arbitration has often been used to enforce the provisions in cases filed through unions and other organizations. Some arbitration cases result in large fines, which agencies must pay" - FCW, Jan 22, 2007

- **Failing to include Section 508 technical requirements in your procurement**, not developing to the standard from the beginning of the process, or accepting a partially compliant or non-compliant product can lead to remediation *costing a lot of money*.

  - *The cost of noncompliance or nonconformance is exposure to lawsuits*

  - *The cost of compliance is minimal if you incorporate it into your agency policy and procedures*

    - **Legal responsibility** for compliance resides with **your agency**, not with the

      vendor.

The Bottom Line

- Section 508 affects all EIT that is **"developed, procured, maintained or used"** by the Federal government

- Not recognizing our responsibility for Section 508 in today's environment is not a good business decision.

- Federal government is the leader in promoting the hiring and accommodating of persons with disabilities.

- Virtual and mobile workplaces present new requirements and challenges

- Watchdog organizations, advocacy groups, and unions have successfully filed lawsuits or arbitration cases.
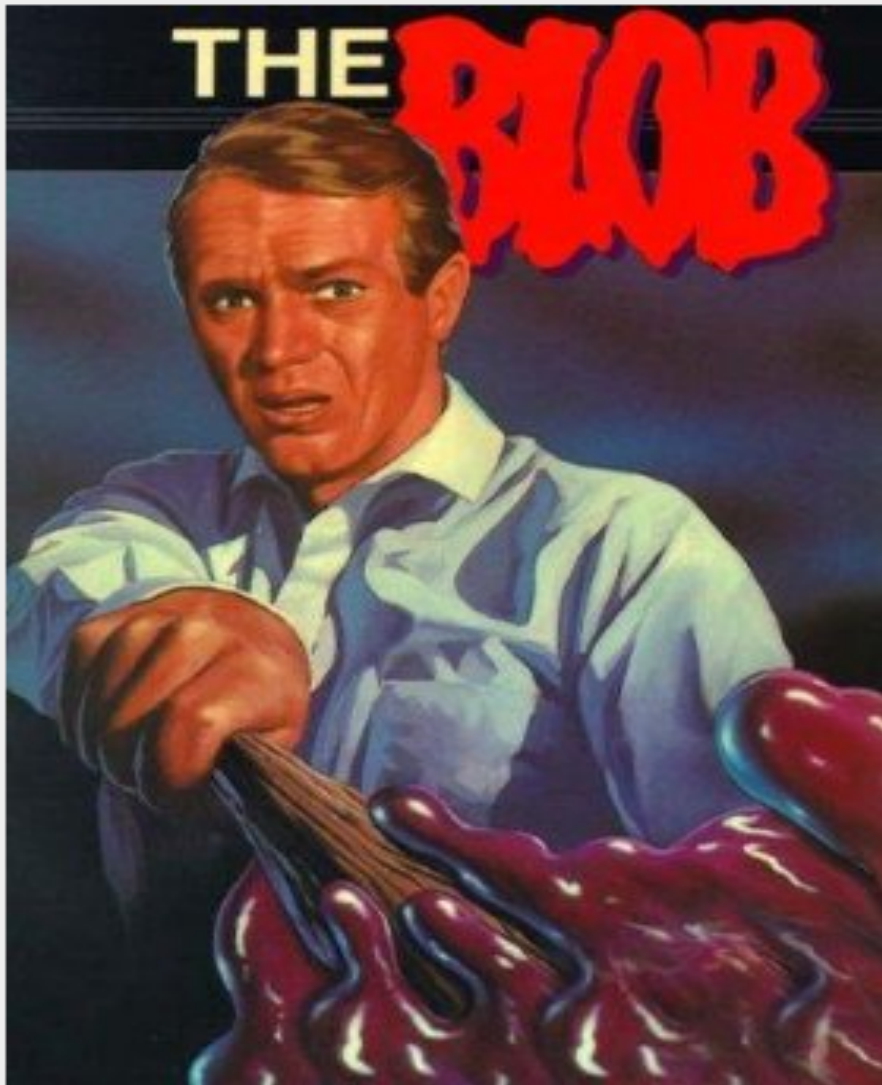
- www.buyaccessible.gov
- The Buy Accessible Wizard is a web-based tool that:
  - Guides users through the acquisition process, gathering data and providing information about Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) and Section 508 compliance
  - Compiles a running summary documenting the process and its results
- The Vendor Accessibility Resource Center (VARC)
  - access to vendor provided accessibility information

BuyAccessible Quick Links

BUYERS: get quick and easy pre-packaged Section 508 documentation for a number of standard EIT deliverables.

MICROPURCHASERS: get pre-packaged Government Product Accessibility Template (GPAT) to directly request a vendor for accessibility information for a number of standard EIT deliverables.

SELLERS: get pre-packaged guidance for development of VPATs for a number of standard EIT deliverables

www.buyaccessible.gov

http://www.buyaccessible.gov/

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BeAccessible
...the place for Section 508 procurement assistance

GSA

Ensuring comparable access for people with disabilities by improving ICT accessibility

Home Buyer Coordinator Contracting Executive Developer/ Tester IT Vendor * Section 508 Blog *

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Weekly Spotlight

Access Board releases NPRM for Section 508

What would you like to do today?

Develop Solicitation:

Access Board releases NPRM for Section 508

For more information, visit the proposed rule on the Access Board website.

Welcome

This website is intended to help you fulfill your Section 508 procurement roles & responsibilities by providing you with tools, guidance and resources.

Site Overview

About Us

BuyAccessible

- BuyAccessible Wizard
- Quick Links for Standard Deliverables
- Vendor Accessibility Resource Center (VARC)
- Quick Reference Guide
- Glossary
- All BuyAccessible Tools

Section 508 Blog

How to Improve Your Website's Accessibility

GSA IT Solutions Navigator

- **What is the IT Solutions Navigator tool?**
  The IT Solutions Navigator tool is a decision support system aimed to assist customers in evaluating GSA's Integrated Technology Services (ITS) solution categories and identifying an appropriate acquisition vehicle to meet their business needs.

- The system is available for public use through the GSA web portal. The IT Solutions Navigator system provides an option for customers to provide contact information for future follow-up purposes on the "Results" page.

Why Enforce the Law?

- It's the right thing to do

- An agency can be sued

- **YOU** have a vested interest

Suggestions Please!

- The BA team encourages your input so:
  - Go to www.buyaccessible.gov
  - Take a tour
  - Review the content
  - Test the links
  - Open the documents
  - Send us your input
  - This is your site and we want to make sure you can find all the information you need to do your job successfully!

Accessibility and Usability

- **Accessibility** is about ensuring an equivalent user experience for people with disabilities, including people with age-related impairments. For the Web, accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with websites and tools, and that they can contribute equally without barriers.

- **Usability** is about designing products to be effective, efficient, and satisfying. Usability is part of the human-computer interaction (HCI) research and design field (which is much broader than usability testing). For web developers, a key aspect of usability is following a user-centered design (UCD) process to create positive user experiences.

Usability and User Experience (UX)

- What the difference is between Usability and User Experience (UX).

- One may think that User Experience doesn't necessarily imply that something is usable (whether it's good or bad, it's still an experience), and hence Usability is superior to User Experience.

- However, the emerging trend is to refer to User Experience as the wider perspective and Usability as being part of User Experience, as illustrated on the next slide.

User Experience (UX)
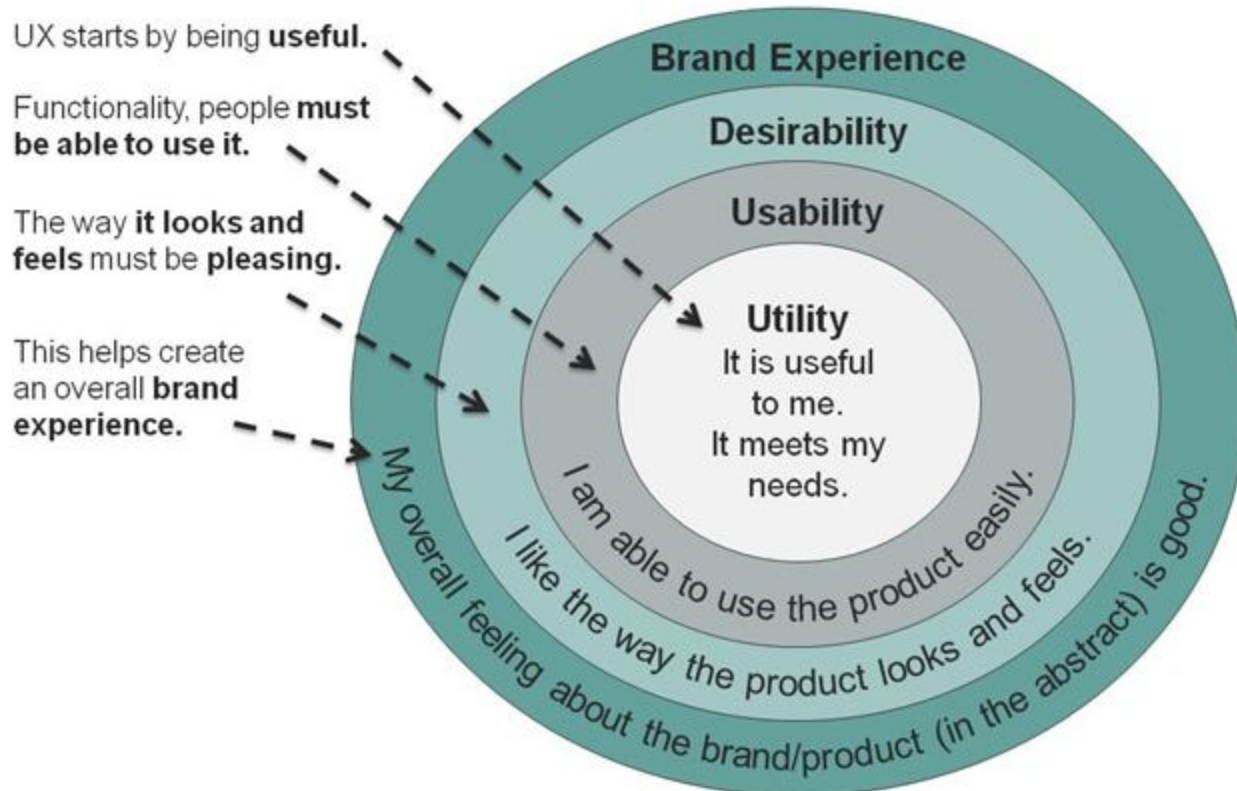
Source: User Experience 2008, nnGroup Conference Amsterdam

Usability Definition

- By this definition Usability is a subset of the overall User Experience.

- Usability answers the question, "Can the user accomplish their goal?" with **effectiveness, efficiency,** and **satisfaction** about the results (as per the ISO 9241-11 definition of usability).

- User Experience also answers the question, "Did the user have as delightful an experience as possible doing so?".

- User Experience takes far more effort to do well, but the results have far better impact.

A Great User Experience

- A commonly used example of great User Experience is the Apple iPhone where Apple has spent efforts in all of the areas above and succeeded in doing so.

- The early iPhones did not include latest technologies (far from it) but was a success nevertheless due to being a great User Experience as per definition above.

- **IT's all about the User Experience**, not about the technology itself.

User Experience Analogy

- Here is an analogy:
- **User experience** = road trip via automobile
- Information architecture = roads built for automobiles
- **Usability** = easy to read signs on the road
- A good user experience would be a road trip that was on a good road with easy to read signs to guide the way. The experience is better when the usability is better. Therefore, if the signs were easy to read and there were many of them, then the trip would probably be even better. But maybe not. That is what user testing is for, right?

User Experience

- The entire journey that a customer encounters from start to finish, (finding the store, parking car, shopping, paying, and leaving)
The same analogy could be applied to web user experience, the entire capsulated journey a user has on a website.

- To extend the analogy, usability of Total Customer Experience in a store would be the efficiency of checkout, ample aisle space, easy to use shopping carts, escalators and elevators.

- User experience encompasses much more than that, as it involves the brand, the lightning, the people, all touch points tangible and intangible that the user encounters.

Principles of Accessible and Universal Design

- "Accessible Design" calls for design that includes the needs of people whose physical, mental, or environmental conditions limit their performance. "Universal Design" aims to extend standard design principles to include people of all ages and abilities, but remains at the level of generality, so it does not address all the specific needs of any particular disability.

- But even for people who do not have any specific physical or mental characteristics that affect computer use, it has been found that adopting universal design principles can reduce fatigue, increase speed, decrease errors, and decrease learning time for all users. In many ways, universal design addresses the larger issues of usability by making things easier for everyone.

International Standard for Human Centered Design

- The new version of ISO 13407, the International Standard for Human Centered Design (which will be called ISO 9241-210 to bring it into line with other usability standards), will also use the term "user experience" according to this link.

- There's a lot of debate on this topic out there. Here's a few links for those interested:

- The Battle Between Usability and User-Experience

- The Difference Between Usability and User Experience

- Usability vs. user experience

Resources

- www.buyaccessible.gov

- www.access-board.gov

- www.usability.gov

- www.cap.mil

- www.w3c.org/WAI/ER/tools

- http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/usable

Questions?

Thank You!

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