Tips for Employers:

Making Web-Based Job Application Forms Accessible to All Users

**Why Address Accessibility?**

More frequently than not, online job applications have become the main platform to facilitate the employment recruitment process for both employers and jobseekers. Web based recruitment systems have made it possible for many job seekers to find and apply for jobs more easily and quickly by simply completing web-based applications or registering online; employers are able to systematically retrieve and evaluate candidate information from the system they have in place. At the same time, accessibility barriers in some online application processes make it difficult for qualified applicants with disabilities to connect with job opportunities.

**How do you know that your online recruitment process is accessible to all qualified applicants or users?**

**Key Accessibility Best Practices for Design**

* Include alternative text for non-text content such as pictures
* Utilize meaningful document structure such as headings and lists.
* Mark up data tables with headings and associate cell content with the headers.
* Ensure that all form elements have labels and that the labels are associated with the correct form element.
* Use concise, meaningful text for links so that links make sense out of context.
* Add captions to all multimedia elements; if not possible, provide a text transcript.
* When links to documents such as PDFs or MS Word Docs are provided, make sure those documents are accessible as well.
* If a scanned document is used, be sure it is readable text and not just an image of text. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software can often convert images of text to readable text.
* Allow users to skip repetitive elements on the page.
* Do not rely on color alone to convey information.
* Make sure content is clearly written and easy to read.
* Care should be taken early in the website development process if using Java script; Java script can create accessibility challenges.

**Key Considerations for Accessible Web Form Application Process**

Typical composition tools are not adequate to ensure accessibility. A grammar checker will tell you if the words should be used together, but will never tell you whether your meaning is clear. Human judgment is critical.

* **Test or evaluate your website accessibility. You may use one of the following programs to evaluate accessibility issues in a particular website program and design:** 
  + WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool: <http://wave.webaim.org/>

*Freely available tool to support testing accessibility from WebAIM.*

* + WAVE Toolbar (Chrome Extension, Firefox Toolbar): <http://wave.webaim.org/toolbar/>

*Because no data is sent to WAVE server, can be used to evaluate content that is password protected, dynamically generated or scripted, or on an intranet.*

* + Other Tools: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools/>

*W3C Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools List (48 tools)*

* **Evaluate Form Accessibility and Usability**
  + Check to make sure all necessary instructions and cues are provided.
  + Check that form controls are associated with a label element.
  + Check that groups of checkboxes and radio buttons are associated using field set and legend.
  + Check that the form can be completed and submitted with a keyboard only.
  + When tabbing through the form, make sure the navigation order is logical and consistent with the visual order of the form.
  + Check that error recovery is functional after form validation.
  + Alert the user to the presence of the error in an obvious and accessible manner.
  + Allow the user to easily access the form controls that need to be modified.
  + Allow resubmission and revalidation of the form.

<http://webaim.org/techniques/formvalidation/>

* **Test with a Screen Reader**

Screen reader users navigate using functions that are more sophisticated than just reading the page. Testing with a screen reader can be useful to get a sense for how navigation, forms, and dynamic content are working.

WebAIM Tutorials on Testing with Screen Readers:

* + - JAWS: <http://webaim.org/articles/jaws/>
    - NVDA: <http://webaim.org/articles/nvda/>
    - VoiceOver: <http://webaim.org/articles/voiceover/>
    - Screen Reader Q&A: <http://webaim.org/articles/screenreader_testing/>
* **Evaluate the following your site for the following barriers which may result in barriers for people with various disabilities:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Visual** | **Hearing** | **Physical** | **Cognitive or Neurological** |
| unlabeled graphics, undescribed video | lack of captioning for videos | content that is mouse-dependent  lack of keyboard access | lack of consistent navigation structure |
| poorly marked-up tables or frames | lack of transcripts for audio content | lack of support for menu commands | overly complex presentation or language |
| lack of keyboard support or screen reader compatibility |  |  | lack of illustrative non-text materials |
|  |  |  | flickering or strobing designs on pages |

* **User Experience Testing**
* As with all usability testing, it is important to include a wide enough scope of users, to be clear about expectations, and to measure task performance rather than user skills.
* The best approach is to make sure your usability design team includes disability expertise to ensure the validity of your evaluations.