INTRODUCTION

It can be in the best interest of an organization to make their website accessible to the disabled and elderly. Disabilities not only include the blind and hearing impaired, but also those that are neurologically and mentally challenged (W3C, 2005). Information is by definition, supposed to “inform”, and this is better achieved if certain groups of people are not excluded. This does, however, entail a certain amount of cost and effort, so the benefit may not be worth it for some organizations. The company I work for, Life Technologies, is a supplier of products used in the scientific analysis industry (E.g., biotechnology, patient diagnostics, etc.), falls into this category.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF CUSTOMERS ARE NOT DISABLED OR ELDERLY

First of all, those that work in the science industry, particularly biotechnology are not disabled or elderly. It is difficult, if not impossible for a disabled person to work in the laboratory. Almost all of the senses are required to use our products to perform experiments. For example, a scientist would need the ability to see in order to properly measure and the ability to hear in order to listen for important sounds emitted by our machines. Those that are mentally challenged will not benefit either because none of them are working in the scientific industry.

In the United States, it is estimated that less than 1 percent of the population is blind (Frase, 2009). Added to this is the fact that only, a small percentage of college graduates have a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) degree. One does not have to do a thorough cost benefit analysis to see that the enormous amount of cost and effort will not result in a return on investment.

THE HEARING IMPAIRED CAN ALREADY ACCESS OUR INFORMATION

Our website does contain video, which the blind will not be able to view. It has already been addressed that sight is probably the most important sense in the scientific industry. The very few that are hearing impaired can simply read the accompanying literature for our products. Furthermore, the video on my company’s website is also made available on our own YouTube channel (Life Technologies, 2014). All videos have the annotations switch available, which enabled subtitles.

CONCLUSION

I am in full agreement that the more people that can view an organization’s website, the better. However, the current market conditions do not justify our organization undertaking this massive effort alone. The paradigm of how scientists work would have to change; to work in the scientific industry, one needs the ability to see, hear, feel, and smell. Until advances in technology are made to somehow give these senses to those impaired, increasing our website’s accessibility to the disabled is highly unlikely to benefit our organization and the society at large.

REFERENCES:

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