

Accessibility Research Program

This case study details the implementation of an Accessibility Testing Program at a tech company to enhance digital inclusivity. By engaging testers with accessibility needs and specialized vendors, the program improved user experience, ensured WCAG compliance, and generated \$50K in additional revenue over three months.

Background

With digital accessibility becoming a paramount concern for technology companies, there was a pressing need to ensure that digital products and services are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. Recognizing this, the company launched an Accessibility Testing Program to systematically address and mitigate usability hurdles, thereby fostering an inclusive digital environment

Objectives

Enhance Digital Accessibility:

Systematically evaluate digital assets using assistive technologies to identify and rectify accessibility barriers.

Engage with Accessibility Communities:

Develop a robust panel of testers with disabilities to gain insightful feedback on usability.

Ensure Legal Compliance: Achieve and maintain compliance with WCAG and other accessibility standards.

Drive Revenue Growth: Leverage improved accessibility as a differentiator to tap into new market segments and generate additional revenue.

Methodology

Engaging with Vendors and Testers

- **Vendor Collaboration:** Partnered with specialized vendors to access a diverse pool of participants with accessibility needs.
- **Panel Development:** Assembled a proprietary panel of 40 testers with various disabilities, ensuring a wide range of feedback on product usability and accessibility.

Continuous Testing and Enhancement

- **Lifecycle Integration:** Embedded accessibility testing throughout the product development lifecycle, from conception through to deployment.
- **Assistive Technology Utilization:** Employed a variety of assistive technologies to conduct thorough evaluations of digital assets.
- **Feedback Implementation:** Acted on insights and feedback from the panel to make iterative enhancements to product design and functionality.

Compliance and Documentation

- **WCAG Adherence:** Ensured that all digital assets met or exceeded WCAG standards, documenting compliance efforts meticulously.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Established a framework for ongoing accessibility evaluation and enhancement, adapting to evolving standards and technologies.

Outcomes

Improved Usability and Compliance

The initiative led to marked improvements in the accessibility and usability of the company's digital assets, significantly enhancing the user experience for individuals with disabilities. Compliance with WCAG and other standards was achieved, mitigating legal risks and reinforcing the company's commitment to inclusivity.

Revenue Growth

By addressing and enhancing digital accessibility, the company was able to access new market segments, resulting in an additional revenue stream of \$50K within three months. This underscored the economic value of inclusive design and accessibility.

Community Engagement and Brand Image

The program fostered stronger relationships with the accessibility community, enhancing the company's brand image as a leader in digital inclusivity. Engaging directly with users with disabilities provided invaluable insights, driving more user-centric product development.

User Experience Overview

Creating an effective user experience (UX) testing framework for an Accessibility Testing Program involves several critical steps, including participant recruitment, test format selection, and continuous engagement.

User Persona Recruitment

Objective: To identify potential participants for the Accessibility Testing Program who use assistive technologies or have specific accessibility needs.

Screener Questions:

1. Do you use any assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, voice recognition software) on a daily basis? Please specify.
2. Have you encountered any accessibility barriers while using digital products in the past 6 months?
3. On a scale from 1 to 5, how comfortable are you with providing detailed feedback on digital products?
4. Are you available to participate in a series of tests over a 5-month period?

Target User Persona for Selection:

- Regular use of assistive technologies.
- Experience with digital product accessibility barriers.
- Willingness to provide detailed feedback.
- Availability for the duration of the testing program.

Test Format Selection

Moderated Sessions (Initial and Mid-Program): Conducted one-on-one sessions at the start and midpoint to deeply understand user interactions and barriers. These sessions were conducted virtually, allowing for screen sharing and real-time observation.

Diary Study (Ongoing): Participants maintained a diary of their experiences using the digital products over the program period. This approach captured real-time feedback and longitudinal changes in user experience.

Unmoderated Tasks (Continuous): Assigned specific tasks for participants to complete independently, using the digital products. These tasks were designed to cover a broad spectrum of functionalities and accessibility features.

Focus Group (End of Program): Convened a focus group with participants to discuss their overall experiences, key findings, and suggestions for improvement. This collaborative session helped identify common themes and areas for enhancement.

Continuous Engagement

- **Number of Testers:** Aiming for a diverse panel, recruit 40 proprietary testers, ensuring a wide representation of disabilities and assistive technology use.
- **Testing Frequency:** Conduct moderated sessions with each participant twice (at the beginning and midpoint), assign unmoderated tasks monthly, and require weekly diary entries. Conclude with a focus group session.
- **Feedback Loops:** Establish regular intervals for reviewing diary entries and unmoderated task feedback, ideally on a bi-weekly basis, to quickly identify and address emerging issues.

Strategic Business Advantage of Accessibility

The Accessibility Testing Program exemplifies the multifaceted benefits of embedding accessibility into the core of digital product development. Beyond compliance and enhanced user experience, the initiative demonstrated significant business value through revenue growth and improved brand perception. This case study serves as a compelling argument for prioritizing accessibility, not just as a legal or ethical imperative, but as a strategic business advantage.

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