

EXTRAORDINARILY BETTER

**How prioritizing accessibility leads to better virtual experiences—and
better business.**



BLACKBIRD



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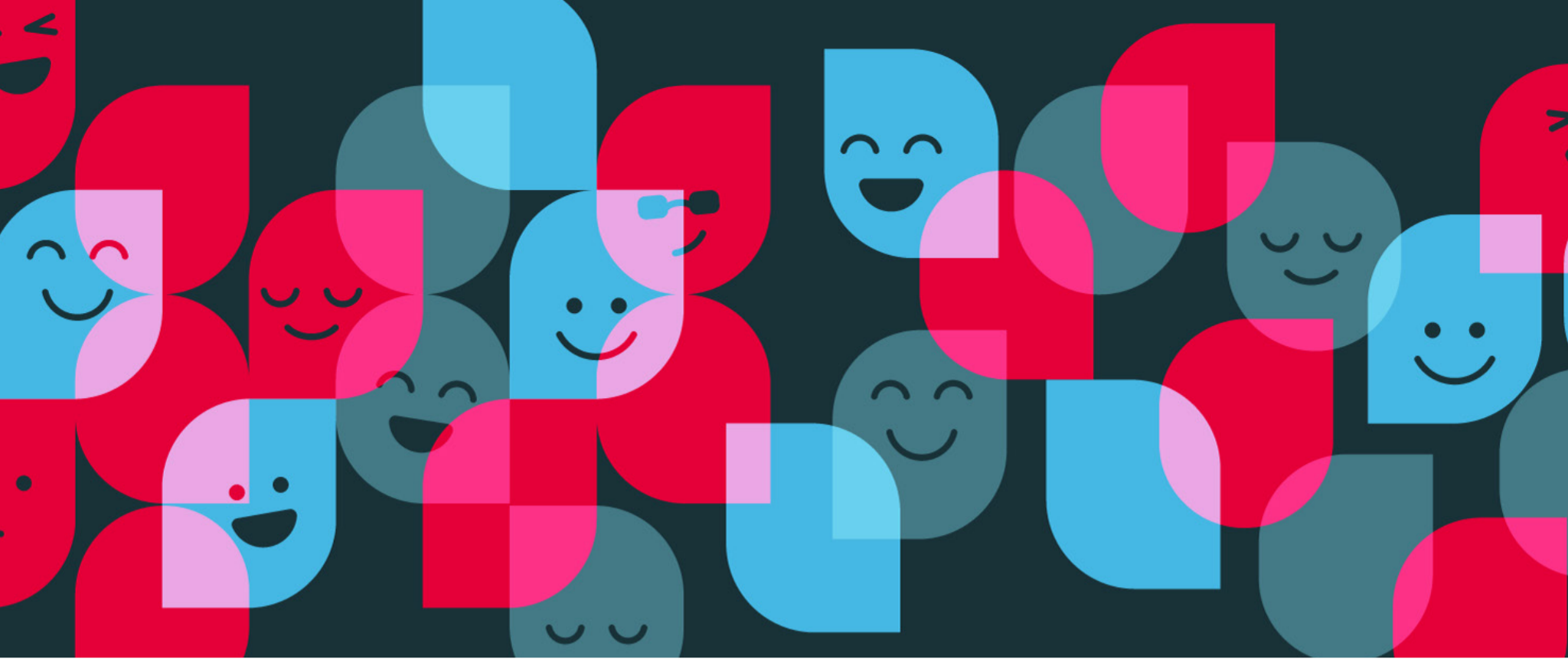
“The one argument for accessibility that doesn’t get made nearly often enough is how extraordinarily better it makes some people’s lives. How many opportunities do we have to dramatically improve people’s lives just by doing our job a little better?”

— **Steve Krug**

Author of *Don’t Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*



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Contents

What Is Accessibility?	4
Why Accessibility Matters	6
Common Considerations for Accessibility	8
Blackbird's 10 Accessibility Fundamentals	10
Accessibility Doesn't Have To Be an Afterthought	13
Blackbird Digital	14



What Is Accessibility?



A textbook will tell you that accessibility refers to how a person uses a digital product, such as a website, an app, or a system, and how that digital product serves them. There are federal regulations that define accessibility requirements for web- and computer-based services.

That is accurate. But it's not the whole story.

Accessibility isn't just a checkbox exercise. It's a *mindset*.

Think of this this way: There are nearly eight billion people on this planet, each with different needs and a different life story. Almost 60% of the population has internet access, which means your website has 4.7 billion potential visitors.

Accessibility means creating a digital experience that welcomes and accommodates as many of those people as possible. An accessible website is a pleasure for everyone to use, with no barriers to entry for people who need some extra support.

The Four Universal Principles of Accessibility

There's a four-part acronym that defines the cornerstone principles of accessibility: POUR.



Perceivable

Perception happens through the senses. A perceivable site gives multiple options for your users to take in the elements of your site using their senses.

Examples: transcripts of audio content, closed captions on video, high-contrast colors in the design.



Operable

An operable website is easy to use, with clear wayfinding and user-friendly navigation. A user should be able to move around your website and accomplish tasks with ease whether they're using a mouse, a touchscreen or touchpad, a keyboard, or voice commands.

Examples: keyboard-operable menus, objects and hyperlinks that are large enough for finger-tap selection.



Understandable

An understandable website should be thoughtfully and intuitively organized so people can use it without confusion. There shouldn't be any point at which a user feels disoriented or has to guess where to find what they need.

Examples: consistent design elements and menus, common vocabulary words, no acronyms without definition.



Robust

A robust website should adapt seamlessly to different accessibility functions, such as voice-command navigation, text magnification, and more. The website should also perform equally on a mobile device, a tablet, and a desktop.

Examples: compatibility with a variety of operating systems and devices, accessible media players, compatibility with keyboard and voice inputs.

Why Accessibility Matters

— A Business Case

Creating a welcoming virtual environment is vital to being a good person in this day and age. At Blackbird, we believe an accessible internet has the power to unite and connect people of all abilities in a way that has never before been possible.

But accessibility has value even beyond the power of inclusion. There's a real business case for accessibility. Adhering to accessibility best practices can make a meaningful difference in the success of your website and your business.



Why Accessibility Matters — A Business Case

If you don't accommodate someone's needs, they won't come back to your site.

Imagine missing out on a potential loyal customer because they couldn't navigate the menu structure on your site or move around using voice commands. This is a preventable loss. Create a website that's easy and enjoyable to use, and people will come back.

Ignoring accessibility is bad for your brand.

A growing number of consumers—over 70%*—prefer to buy from companies that share their values. People who care deeply about accessibility can tell if your website isn't set up to be inclusive to all your users. That might be enough to drive them away. Some people might go so far as to share their thoughts on the matter publicly, via social media or another platform. It's never been easier for that type of criticism to go viral, which could spell disaster for your brand.



Accessibility benefits everyone.

Your customer with a hearing impairment isn't the only one who benefits when you publish a transcript and add closed captions to your video. A new parent who doesn't want to wake their fussy baby could be thrilled to discover a silent way to enjoy their favorite podcast.

Accessibility is good for SEO.

Adhering to a few accessibility best practices can improve your searching rankings. Every word of alt text you add to your photos is picked up by Google's bots, which can improve your score and draw more people to your website.

Common Considerations for Accessibility

Developing a comprehensive understanding of accessibility starts with an inclusive look at everyone who might benefit from accessibility best practices. Learning about the many categories of disability that may impact a person's experience with your website is crucial to creating a truly accessible user experience.



Visual Impairments

This can range from mild near-sightedness to total blindness and everything in between, such as low vision, color blindness, and more. A visual impairment might make it difficult for someone to read text on a webpage, understand a picture, or figure out where to click to navigate to another page.

Don't forget about photosensitivity too. A website that relies on flashing lights to make a splash can be truly dangerous to someone prone to light-induced seizures.



Hearing Impairments

Hearing loss can range from total deafness to difficulty hearing soft sounds when someone else is talking. Someone with a hearing impairment may be unable to listen to a podcast or watch a video without closed captioning.



Physical Disabilities

Limited motor skills can impact virtually any part of the body and have very different impacts on a person's life. If moving through a website requires extremely precise clicking, some people may be unable to use it.

Common Considerations for Accessibility



Cognitive Impairments

Many people associate cognitive impairment with aging and think primarily of conditions such as dementia. However, cognitive impairment can also refer to lifelong conditions or learning disabilities such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) and dyslexia. Cognitive impairment manifests a little differently in every person and will have a different impact on how they interact with a webpage.

Mood disorders and other mental illnesses can also impact the way people think and thus interact with a website. Brain fog, disorganized thought patterns, and sensitivity to sensory overload might make it difficult for someone to take in a jampacked webpage with dense text and too many things to click on.

Everyone in the design world loves to hate Comic Sans. But did you know that Comic Sans is a favorite font of people with dyslexia? Comic Sans uses very few repeat shapes, meaning that every letter is totally unique. As a result, it's much easier for people with dyslexia to identify individual letters and thus read whole words in Comic Sans than any other font.

*"Sing a song of sixpence, a pocketful of rye,
four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,"*

*"Sing a song of sixpence, a pocketful of rye, four
and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,"*

Blackbird's 10 Fundamentals

for making your website accessible to everyone.

Accessibility is as complex and ever-changing as the people who visit your website. There's a lot of nuance and detail to consider, and we know it can be overwhelming at first. If you're looking to get started with some accessibility basics, we recommend these beginner guidelines. As you learn more, you can implement other changes and features, but this is a strong start. You can make a meaningful difference in the accessibility of your site with just these ten tips.

01

Use color as an aesthetic tool, not a navigation tool.

If you're relying on color to differentiate items on your website or tell someone where to go, you're going to create problems for someone with visual impairments.

02

All your images—and we mean *all of them*—should include alt text in the code.

Alt text, or “alternative text,” is a short, written description of an image. Its job is to describe images to people who can't see them. It can be as simple as “red hat” or as complex as “stylish woman in a red hat going for a walk with her schnauzer, who is also wearing a red hat.”

03

Use headers to break up big chunks of text.

We don't think anyone *likes* reading through a dense block of words on a webpage. When you use headers to divide your copy into digestible paragraphs, you make reading more enjoyable for everyone—especially people who struggle to settle their eyes on a page without the visual anchor of some white space.

Blackbird's 10 Fundamentals for Making Your Website Accessible to Everyone

04

Make sure your website is friendly to all navigation systems.

It should be equally easy for a person using a mouse, a keyboard, a touchscreen, or a voice-control system to move around your site.

05

Make sure all content is accessible in multiple formats.

Publish the transcripts to your podcast. Add closed captioning to your videos. Enable text-to-speech functionality on every article. By offering multiple options for consuming your content, you include everyone who visits your site.

06

Don't rely on media alone.

You can embed a video in your homepage if you want, but only if there are other ways to get the information from your video. Videos aren't accessible for everyone. Make it easy to get the transcript, add closed captions, and include other types of content on the webpage that support your message.

07

Remember every user when you design forms.

Your forms should be well labeled with clear instructions, and it should be easy to navigate from one fillable field to another.

Blackbird's 10 Fundamentals for Making Your Website Accessible to Everyone

08

Resizable text shouldn't break your site.

If your webpage goes completely haywire just because someone bumped up the magnification to 125%, you need a better design.

09

Don't use automatic navigation.

In other words, don't make assumptions about how quickly people want to move through your site. For example, if you use a slideshow to display content, don't set up an automatic timer to progress to each slide. Let your users click through when they're ready.

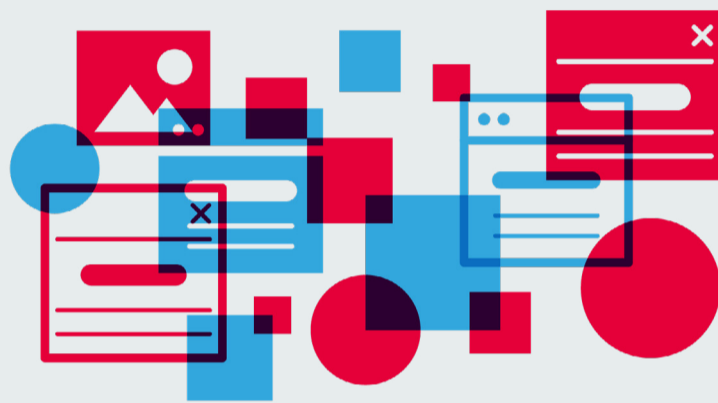
10

Invest in 508 testing to make sure you're compliant.

508 testing can help you determine whether your site follows all the rules when it comes to accessibility requirements for information and communication technology. "508" refers to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which outlines most of these rules. Visit www.section508.gov to learn more.

Does this list seem overwhelming? Keep reading. We can help.

Accessibility Doesn't Have To Be an Afterthought



Picture this: You're building a brand-new website. You've invested a lot of money—and maybe a little blood, sweat, or tears—and after months of development, the finish line is so close you can taste it.

With just one more round of reviews to go, you suddenly remember an article you once read about accessibility. You do a quick Google search, pull up a checklist, and feel your heart sink. Because your new website doesn't match even half of the criteria.

There's a heavy price to pay when you wait until the last minute to start thinking about the accessibility of your site. You could end up needing to redo big chunks of your site, which can push back your timeline and rack up extra costs. You might have to abandon certain features entirely because you can't afford to retool them for accessibility without going over budget. And your boss is not happy.

Unfortunately, this happens a lot. And this last-minute approach rarely results in an accessibility experience you're truly proud of. It usually just feels like a frantic scramble for a mediocre outcome, just to check a few boxes.

Thankfully, *it doesn't have to be this way*

Blackbird Digital

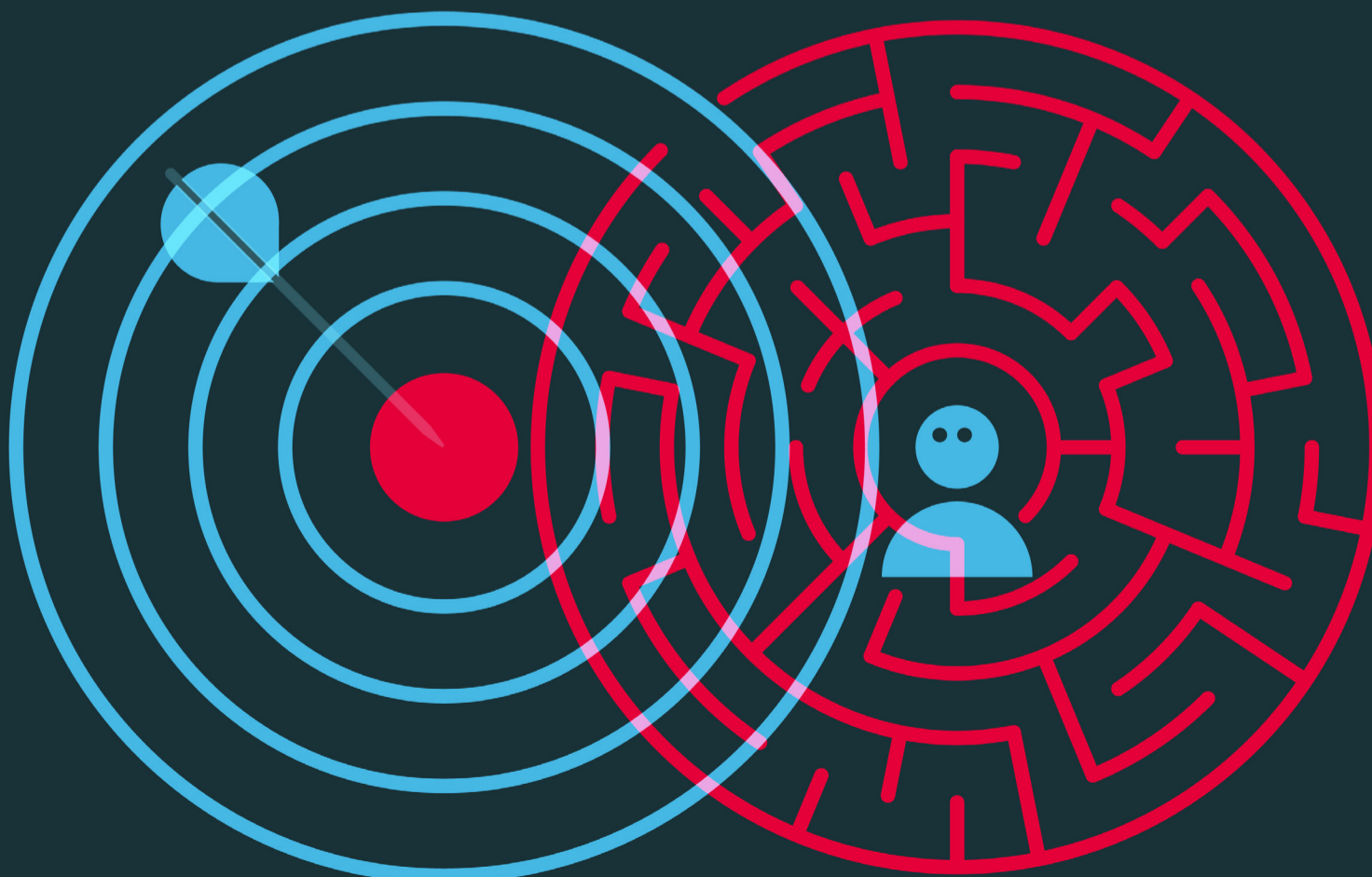
— Web designers, app developers, accessibility experts.



Blackbird Digital is more than just a web and app development agency. We're accessibility experts and big believers in the power of accessibility to take your website to the next level.

The Blackbird team is extremely passionate about accessibility. When you work with us, accessibility is part of the conversation from day one of your project. We've practically memorized the federal guidelines on accessibility, and we're experts on the tools and functionality you need to go above and beyond. We predict an incredible array of new technologies and functionality becoming available in the coming years, and we're committed to learning everything we can about those, too.

We offer a full suite of web and app development services to bring your digital vision to life. No matter what we're working on together, we'll make sure you're adhering to accessibility guidelines and creating an online environment that welcomes everyone.



Here's What We Can Do for You



User Experience (UX)

- Accessibility and ADA Compliance
- Analytics & User Insight
- User Persona Creation
- Visitor Journey Mapping
- Information Architecture
- Keyword Research



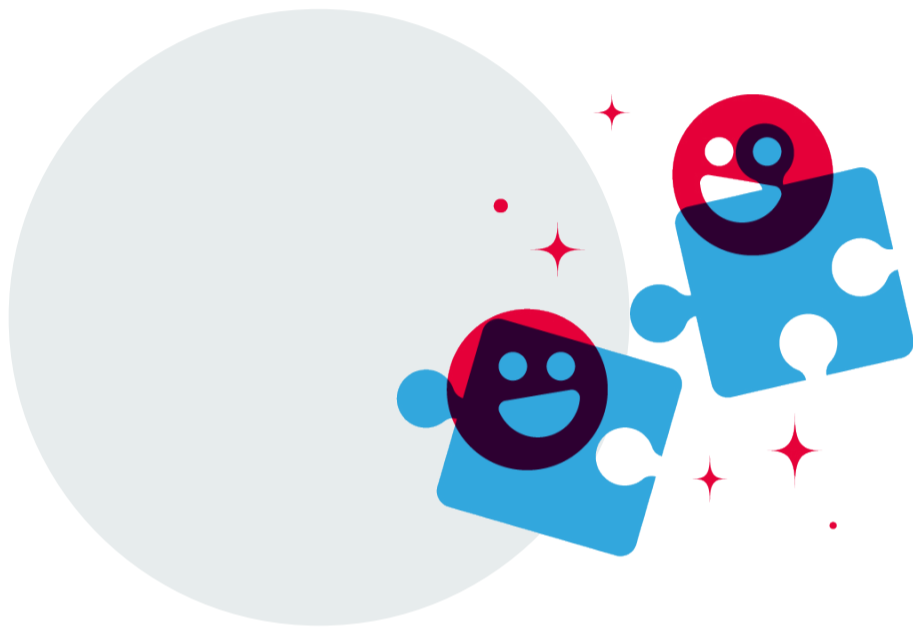
User Interface Design (UI)

- Design Systems
- Style Guides & Standards
- UI Kits
- UI Design
- Website Design
- Prototypes



Web & App Development

- WordPress Custom Them & Plugin Development
- Systems Integration
- CRM Enablement
- Analytics
- iOS & Android App Development



Want to talk about your project?

Get in touch:

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