Understanding ADA Guidelines For Your Website Presentation

Slide 1: (Video start to :28 second) - Hello! My name is Patrice Valentine I am the president and owner of ProFusion Web Solutions. Thank you so much for attending the **Understanding ADA Guidelines For Your Website Presentation**. This whole presentation should be pretty short and if you have any questions please feel free to schedule an appointment with me. All of our calendar information is going to be at the end of the presentation and also always available on our website profusionwebsolutions.com.

Slide 2: What is Accessibility? (:28 -2:45) - Let's go ahead and jump right in and talk about what is accessibility especially when we start talking about accessibility and a website or your digital products. I think we're all relatively familiar with what the ADA is or the American with Disabilities Act. It was signed in July of 1990 and that was really created to protect folks when they're trying to go into a physical business. It helps with things like accessible entrances that are wide enough for wheelchairs, putting grab bars into restrooms, wheelchair ramps things like that. All things that make a business more accessible. Well as more and more businesses started going online there obviously was a need to make sure that the digital side of that business was also accessible. We started to see things like the web content accessibility guidelines or WCAG released all the way back in 1999. That's when we first started having the conversations about how our content online is going to be handled. So they had a whole list of of guidelines that were published and then revisited and revisited and revisited again until they were officially published. Those web content accessibility guidelines were officially published with recommendations in October of 2023 and those really became the defacto standards for website compliance. Then in April of 2024 so just a year ago the Department of Justice published updated accessibility guidelines that did have standards for digital assets things like websites, things like your intranet, your downloadable PDFs and things like that. When it comes to accessibility on your website we're talking about the design and development so that all people including those with disabilities can use understand and interact with the website effectively. This might include folks with visual impairments (blindness or low vision or potentially even color blindness) or hearing impairments. So if you have some audio cues on your website if there's someone with hearing impairments that might be hard for them to hear and understand, and then things like motor disabilities So if you have trouble using a mouse or a keyboard making sure that your website and digital assets are still able to be used for folks with motor disabilities.

Slide 3: Why Accessibility Matters: (2:46 - 4:45) Why are we talking about this? So obviously the new standards have been published but really from our point of view we like

to   look at it as it really is just the kind thing to do to make sure that your website can be used by anyone who wants to come visit your business. There are 61 million - more than 61 million - Americans with disabilities living in the United States right now. So it's not a small market necessarily. It's folks just like me and you - your neighbors that are that are wanting to come to your website and make sure that it it works well for them. If you're looking at it from a cost point of view - there are lawsuits We have some that we'll talk about later on in the presentation that kind of set a precedent for this. If you're looking at you know a lot of the lawsuits obviously they're pretty expensive to deal with. Many of the lawsuits for an accessibility issue like this would likely get settled out of court but if it does go to court obviously your costs can easily exceed the $150,000 mark that we have on the screen here. Plus you'll have to remediate your site anyway you'll have to make those updates to make it more accessible to follow those guidelines anyway. Not to mention the hidden cost - there is the obvious cost that you'll have to pay for the lawsuit but the hidden costs of brand damage, bad PR potential loss of trust in your marketplace just things that you don't want to have to deal with as a business owner That's why a lot of companies view following the the WCAG guidelines as just an extra insurance policy. It's definitely cheaper than getting sued. The little bonus down there is it also helps with your search engine optimization. A lot of the things that you would do to your website to help increase your search engine presence are the same things that we do when we're optimizing your site to make sure that it is more accessible. Again, we'll cover some of those items when we get a little bit further into the presentation But making your site accessible turns out not only is it kind but it also helps with your search engine rankings. As it turns out accessible websites reach more customers and protect your business from legal risk That's why we're talking about accessibility here.

Slide 4: Key Principles - POUR Framework (4:46 -6:04) Now if we look at the key principles we we kind of put this into what we would call the POUR framework. The first is that all of the content needs to be perceivable. So users must be able to perceive all the information presented This means that nothing can be invisible to their senses. All content must appear on the page itself The O is for operable. Users must be able to navigate and use the interface on your website. The site should be used or be usable by folks with various input devices or limitations including those who may not be able to use a mouse. So keyboard operation is of special importance here as well. The U is for understandable. Information in the operation of the website must be easy to understand. People should easily be able to read and comprehend and predict how things will behave on your site. And then the R there is just for robust The content must be compatible with current and future technologies including assistive tools. So your website should work well with a a wide range of tech like screen readers, voice recognition tools - things that might just help

anyone with one of those limitations be able to navigate and use all elements of your of your website. So the POUR framework is really just making your website really kind and easy for folks to be able to navigate around.

Slide 5: Common Accessibility Issues (6:05 - 8:24) Some of the most common issues that we see when we're looking at a website. The first is is missing alt text. So the alt text on an image is if you have an image on your website you should be able to put your mouse over that image and be able to hover over the image and have a little box pop up. It's just a real subtle box that's going to tell you what that image is all about. Now you might go to your website and see that your site has when you mouse over the image you know img3.9.4 4.jpeg and that might be your image description which really doesn't help anyone who can't visually see what's on that image. It doesn't help them understand what's in that image. So a good alt tag for the image that's on my screen right now might be something like "an office space with a computer lit up with code showing on the computer screen. The colors are orange and pink" or something like that. So it's a really descriptive image that just shows or that just that writes out in text what is being shown on the image. Another thing we see a lot of is poor color contrast to where you have you know maybe dark gray text on a black background or even light gray text on a white background We see a lot of people trying to kind of get cute with their colors or really follow their brand standards to the point of it just becomes not visible really on the screen itself. So that would be poor color contrast between the text and the background and that text needs to really be readable for folks with visual impairments. Another thing we see a lot of is inaccessible forms So maybe your form - if you have a contact us form or a request an estimate form it might

be missing labels or the error message that pops up might be preventing someone from being able to successfully complete that form. So you need to make sure that your forms are labeled correctly so that people do know how or what what information is being requested and expected from the form itself. And it needs to be able to be submitted with the with keyboard clicks as well - so not just a mouse click. And that brings us right into keyboard navigation issues where if you can't use a mouse, if you do have some of those motor issues that you are unable to use a mouse to navigate around a site you should be able to use your keyboard codes to be able to navigate and submit information on a website. So those are some of the main accessibility issues that we're seeing when we look through folks' sites.

Slide 6: Simple Steps to Improve Accessibility (8:28 - 11:34) Obviously some of these are pretty straightforward to to fix. One just add descriptive text to all of your images. This is really good not only for accessibility but it's also really good for search engine optimization. So this is another thing where Google can't read - it doesn't know what you know image 4.9.6.JPEG is. It doesn't know what that means But if you put provide a really descriptive

text based description of what's in that image, it's not only going to help folks understand what that image is showing on your site but it's also going to help Google and other search engines understand what that image is as well. So describe the purpose of the image and the content of the image as well. You can do this - I said it was an easy thing to do, and I understand that I live and breathe this world all the time - So in order to do that you would need to log into whatever content management system you're using - For example if you're using WordPress you would simply log into WordPress go to the pages function edit your page and then when you click on that image to edit it. Almost all modern content management systems will provide you with a way to add that alt text. So you'll simply have to go into your website edit the page, click on the image and then click to edit that image and add in that that descriptive alt text there as well. The next thing you want to go in and do is you can ensure and update the color contrast. So if you have any you know gray backgrounds with yellow text on it you might want to just update that to make it so that it is black text on a white background or white text on a black background or even you know the colors on my screen right now with that kind of pink salmon color that pops off of that white pretty nicely or that cream color background. So just make sure that the colors aren't too close. Make sure you enable keyboard navigation. Again this should be somewhat built in to your content management system if you have a pretty straightforward website but there are some functions - adding something to a cart, submitting a form - that you may need to double check by using your tab key and enter along with the arrow keys on your keyboard So just test that out and see how it works. And then this one I we we talk about a lot is is just using clear language to let people know what you expect them to do when they come to your website. When you come to our website you'll see all over the place we we would love for you to request an estimate. That's what we that's what we really we want people to do when they hit our site. So there is a request an estimate button on every single page. And it doesn't say. we're not using cute language for it. We're not trying to get overly creative with with what we're saying. We really want people to know what we want them to do when they hit our website. So use really clear language. We recommend using a ninth grade reading level or below. I've even seen recommendations of a third grade reading level but somewhere in between there is going to be that sweet spot where you just want to be really clear with what you're offering and what you want people to do when they're on your website and what those navigation items are. So if you wanted to take people to your contact us page - call it contact us page. Just be really clear clear language with that.

Slide 7: Lightning Audit (11:34 -14:34) - So with that in mind let's take a look If you open up your own website or if you have your website on your phone or if you have dual monitors go ahead and open up your website on the other side and just go through and run a quick

audit. I'll walk you through what these items are here But the first is what we would call an accessibility statement. That is typically found at the bottom of your website And it's going to be a document that just talks about kind of what your accessibility policy is. that you are you know attempting to the to the best of your abilities to follow the guidelines - you've made the following changes - You don't have to list out what your changes are but does that accessibility statement live on your website? Again,

a lot of times you'll see it at the bottom If you go to the bottom of our ProFusion web solutions site, you'll see it right there at the bottom. It's just a little document you can click on. If that that document lives on your website, good job! You get plus one point there. So skip navigation - Can users bypass repetitive elements? What we mean by this is can users skip over sections of the content that might be repeated on your website so this could be the navigation menu or the header. Is there a way for them to reach the main content section efficiently? That one on your site again give yourself another plus one on that. If you have animations on your website or videos, is there a way for people to either pause the video - so the space bar is a a great use - to pause a video or make sure it doesn't autoplay. We've all been to a website where all of a sudden we're hearing audio or there's something moving on the screen and we don't know where it's coming from and we don't know how to stop it. Now imagine if you don't have full function of your mouse and you're you're trying to figure out how to to make that video stop. If it's not obvious - if those unwanted animations and videos aren't able to be paused or they autoplay without someone actually requesting that that get played - you can imagine how frustrating that might be to have that have that autoplay on a website. So make sure that that on your site if there is a video or if you have an animation that it doesn't autoplay that the user gets to select to start and stop the video with keyboard function or with mouse function. Then again just kind of do a quick look and feel check - a look and function check on the site. Does your website have those alt tags like we talked about so if you mouse over the images what what is the description that pops up? Do you have links and buttons on your site that are that are easy to see that are obvious links that are obvious buttons on the site? Is the call to action clear? Do people know what they're going to be clicking on and does that color contrast look okay. And finally I've touched on it a few times within this this screen itself within our little audit is can the navigation be used without a mouse are we able to use our keyboard to access the important parts of your site? So that's just a quick - if you're just wanting to do a quick overview on your site these are the things that we're typically going to be looking for.

Slide 8: Web Accessibility Risk Scorecard (14:35 - 17:14) - Now if we're looking at who is going to be most at risk for a potential lawsuit or just you know having a lot of people coming to their site and not having it be accessible and easy to use We've got them kind of

ranked on the site here or on the screen here. So in the US there are groups who are legally required to have accessible websites. Those are going to be federal government agencies, any organization that is receiving federal funding that's going to be required to have an ADA accessible website. Any "public accommodations under the ADA" this is kind of the biggest gray area but courts have increasingly ruled that businesses considered "public accommodations under the ADA" must also make their website accessible This will include retailers, restaurants, gyms banks people like law firms medical offices or any business that really serves the public. And then employers over 15 employees - if you have more than 15 employees also taking a look and making sure that you have your digital assets that follow the WCAG. Now on my screen you'll kind of see it broken down the - bottom one - the bottom two the e-commerce function sites and the revenue and advertising spend there. That's just really visibility increase right? So you have higher visibility - you got people especially with e-commerce - people from anywhere that can be purchasing your products and services And that's going to create a bigger exposure for you If we look at the key legal cases here so ones that really kind of put this on our radar. The first one was back in 2019. It was the Domino's lawsuit. Domino's Pizza versus Robles in 2019. The court ruled that Domino's website and app did need to be accessible. So that was kind of one of those first major ones. It happened to be that someone was attempting to order pizza off of their website and it was not accessible. They were unable to order. So Domino's was one of kind of the first major companies that did see a lawsuit in this area. And then in 2021 Winn Dixie - it was the Winn Dixie case is what it's called and that it just simply reaffirmed the ADA applicability to websites that are tied to physical stores. So Winn Dixie didn't necessarily sell anything on their website, It was just that they had physical locations and in order -

if you wanted to find more information you would go to the website and and it also needed to be accessible. Even if you're not legally required to have an ADA accessible website or one that follows the WCAG, it's a smart business move to have an accessible site. It opens your content up to more people, it protects you from liability, and it shows that your brand is inclusive and professional And again for us we just like to drive home the fact that it's kind. It's inclusive, it's professional and it's kind.

Slide 9: IRS Tax Credits (17:14 - 18:34) And there might be some little tax credit behind it as well. So I will do the quick disclaimer here I am not a tax professional. I am not an accountant nor am I an attorney. I'm providing you this information based on the ADA tax credit but definitely you're going to want to check with your own tax professional on this. What it is is covers up to 50% of your accessibility related expenses less the first $250 of the expense up to $10,250. So let's say you redo your website and it costs you uh $5,000. The the tax credit it's not a deduction - it is a tax credit listed under section 44 of the IRS

code. It will cover up to 50% of the accessibility related expenses less the first $250 up to $10,250. The expenses can be claimed every year and the credit can be carried forward. Your business is eligible for this if you have either 30 or fewer employees or $1 million in revenue the previous tax year. It's either or It's not both. It doesn't have to be both. It's either or So either 30 or fewer employees or $1 million in revenue the past tax year. So there is some tax credit benefits here if you are eligible for that. Just wanted to also point that out.

Slide 10: Thank you & Next Steps (18:34 - 19:37) So I know I've thrown a lot at you today. It's good information on ADA. Again hopefully you'll go to your website and kind of do that lightning check but we also have an audit that we're happy to to provide you with as well. So if you go to profusionwebsolutions.com you will see the ADA audit right there at the top. If you'd like us to run an ADA audit on your website we're happy to do so Just head on over to profusionwebsolutions.com and request that audit right there

We are having additional webinars. Our next one is going to be how AI is changing SEO and search related behavior. All the information for that is also found on our website. And if any of this sparked confusion, questions or you just need more information please please, schedule an appointment with me directly I'm happy to talk you through all of this. My calendar information is also on our website profusionwebsolutions.com or simply give me a call Phone number is right there at the bottom. We thank you Thank you so much for being on this call! We hope it's been beneficial and if you have any questions please reach out!