Digital accessibility:
A strategic commitment

Extending accessibility-first thinking from digital products to the wider organisation

Nilmani Kumar
Jo Wyton

Contents

Introduction

Accessibility shapes how people experience organisations, whether through the digital content you create, the services you provide or the way you communicate. For many years, accessibility has been a key focus for product teams. It's been integrated into processes, tools and design systems, and is something the majority of people working with digital products will be very familiar with.

But what about everything else you create?

For all organisations, accessibility is both a **cultural responsibility** and a **strategic requirement**. Customers, partners and the businesses you work with increasingly expect accessibility by default. Accessibility has become a baseline requirement for trust and credibility. By prioritising it, you support your ability to maintain strong partnerships, meet evolving expectations and operate confidently across markets.

This paper sets out how any organisation can aim to expand the existing accessibility-first mindset they've already developed within their product teams more broadly across their full digital offering. It establishes accessibility as a shared way of thinking that applies to **all** digital content and communications, not just the products we are all so carefully designing and developing.

Our approach is led by a small set of guiding principles that provide a common foundation for decision-making wherever digital content is created or shared. When accessibility principles are applied consistently, they improve clarity, reduce friction and support better outcomes for both people and the organisation.

The good news is that you're not starting from zero.

Across your organisation, accessibility is most likely already part of how you design and deliver your products. This white paper doesn't introduce a new burden - it makes visible what's already happening, connects it into a broader approach and provides a clear direction for how you evolve. Leadership plays a critical role in enabling this shift by reinforcing expectations and supporting all teams to consider accessibility early and consistently.

Why digital accessibility matters

Organisations' approach to accessibility increasingly determines how they are perceived, trusted and able to operate in a digital-first environment. Beyond being the right thing to do, digital accessibility now plays a practical role in how effectively you communicate, manage risk and sustain growth.

Broadening how we all think about accessibility

Accessibility is often narrowly associated with permanent disability. In practice, accessibility effects a much wider range of people and situations. More often than not, access barriers are temporary or situational, not permanent, and arise in everyday situations.

Designing digital content and communication that works under a range of conditions improves usability and resilience for everyone. This broader understanding of accessibility reinforces its relevance to everyday digital work and highlights why accessibility supports clarity, effectiveness, and confidence at scale.

Meeting external expectations

Expectations around accessibility continue to rise across organisations, including those we they partner with. Many organisations now require accessible digital content and services as a condition of engagement,

partnership or procurement. Accessibility has become a baseline expectation rather than a differentiator, influencing who organisations choose to work with and how risk is assessed. Prioritising accessibility helps ensure that you remain a credible and trusted participant in any market.

Trust, credibility and participation

Accessible digital experiences support confidence. When people can reliably access information, understand communications and complete tasks without barriers, trust is strengthened. Conversely, inaccessible content or processes can undermine credibility and signal a lack of care or maturity. Accessibility therefore plays a quiet but critical role in enabling participation and reinforcing trust across digital interactions.

Clear and effective digital communication

Accessible content is clearer, more structured and easier to understand for everyone. Simple practises such as using plain language, meaningful structure and predictable formats improve comprehension and reduce friction. This clarity supports more effective communication internally and externally, reducing confusion, follow-up and reliance on informal explanations or workarounds.

Reducing risk and increasing delivery confidence

When accessibility is overlooked, issues often surface late, creating rework, delays and reputational risk. Considering accessibility early and consistently reduces the likelihood of reactive fixes and supports more predictable outcomes.

Organisational maturity and sustainable growth

Finally, accessibility is a marker of organisational maturity. Embedding accessibility into your everyday work helps ensure that your digital content, communications and services remain fit for purpose. This approach supports sustainable growth by building long-term capability.

Guiding principles

Accessibility is not a separate track. It is a way of thinking about people, participation and long-term organisational maturity. These principles define how you can best approach accessibility across digital content and services. They are not rules or checklists, but shared beliefs that should guide decisions, particularly when accessibility may feel like a trade-off or constraint. Together, they set expectations for how accessibility is prioritised, discussed and embedded across the organisation.

1. Design for real people, not the "average" user

Design isn't only done by designers. People in all roles create digital content from time to time. By 'design', we simply mean 'creation with intent.' In other words, building digital content with the end user in mind, whoever that might be. When designing content, need to design for the diversity of real people and real contexts, rather than an imagined default audience. Organisations should actively recognise and promote the understanding that abilities, environments and ways of interacting vary widely, and that designing for this diversity improves outcomes for everyone.

2. Build accessibility into the way you work

Accessibility is most effective when it is considered early and consistently, not bolted on at the end. Embedding accessibility into normal ways of working reduces rework and avoids late trade-offs. Accessibility sits alongside quality, usability and security as a standard expectation.

XPEXA

3. Clarity over cleverness

Accessible experiences prioritise clarity, predictability and understanding. Everybody values communication and interactions that are clear and consistent. This principle applies equally to products, documents, presentations and everyday communications.

4. Fix the system, not just the symptom

Repeated accessibility issues are a signal of system-level gaps. You can focus on sustainable improvement by strengthening shared tools, templates, guidance and ways of working. Addressing root causes enables accessibility to scale and reduces reliance on repeated, one-off fixes.

5. Accessibility is a shared responsibility

Accessibility is a shared organisational responsibility, not the domain of a single team or role. While accountability differs by role, everyone influences accessibility through the content and products they create. Clear expectations, collaboration and early conversations help normalise accessibility as part of everyday work.

PEXA