



ACCESSIBLE 360
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CONTACT:

Jennifer Weismann

Jennifer@owl-marketing.com

612-716-0556

**ACCESSIBLE360 LEADS REVOLUTION IN MODIFYING WEBSITES
FOR COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

*New consultancy audits, fixes, and monitors websites to ensure inclusion
for the nearly 20 percent of Americans who live with a disability*

MINNEAPOLIS — October 6, 2016 — Nearly 20 percent of Americans live with a disability. And thanks to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) — a law which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public — everyone with a disability is entitled to enjoy access everywhere.

However, this same access isn't yet available on the Internet. Multiple courts as well as the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) take the position that the ADA is also applicable to websites, requiring them to be accessible to all. Although the DOJ has not issued definitive rules, multiple DOJ publications and settlement documents strongly suggest that the proper standard by which to measure website compliance with the ADA are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0). Courts and the DOJ have also made clear that, even in the absence of definitive regulations, owners and operators of websites may face legal action under the ADA as well as state laws if a website is inaccessible to blind, visually impaired, or other disabled persons.

A new consultancy co-founded by Twin Cities entrepreneur Mark Lacek is helping businesses ensure their websites are fully accessible for disabled Americans — to make them ADA-compliant. [Accessible360](#) provides counsel for businesses on this new mandate — including auditing websites for compliance, making repairs to restore usability and monitoring sites for ongoing issues. Accessible360 also provides training and guidance to bake accessibility into the technology design process — so it isn't a one-off event but part of an ongoing effort and culture.

As concerns grow over the legal and financial risks of maintaining websites that are unusable by the nearly 20 percent of Americans who live with disabilities, this emerging national issue is catching many business owners unaware. Both law firms and marketing agencies are searching for solutions to protect their clients' websites.

"This enterprise is possibly the most impactful and important business I've ever invested my time and energy in," said founder Mark Lacek. "We're endeavoring to transform the lives of people living with disabilities by opening up online accessibility to everyone, the same way the ADA opened up accessibility in physical spaces. It's a crucial step to make sure we all have equal access to the same internet features and benefits."

"When you think about it, many of us will face different disabilities— vision loss, hearing loss, changes in mobility — as we age," added Michele Landis, co-founder and head of business development. "We are *all* what the disability community refers to as TABs — temporarily able-bodied. This is a mandate we'll *all* benefit from. But making websites accessible is a complex and constantly evolving space, so that's why we developed this A-list team to create Accessible360. Our consultancy can step in as a third-party partner for any business."

"I have seen a surge in litigation and other enforcement activity against website owners in the past twelve months, mainly involving blind or visually impaired individuals alleging that

websites are not accessible to them in violation of the ADA, “ said Steve Helland, a website accessibility and technology attorney at Fredrikson & Byron. “In the private sector, the issue of website accessibility has been largely ignored for the past decade. As a result, many developers and companies have built websites that might be elaborate and stunning to a fully-sighted viewer, but are essentially closed for business to a user assisted by screen-reader technology. Given recent actions by courts, the DOJ, plaintiff-firms and disability groups, as well as growing public and media attention generally, I expect the substantial legal activity I’ve seen to only increase in the remainder of 2016 and into 2017.”

For customers who don’t know if their websites are ADA-compliant and don’t know how to correct issues while maintaining an uninterrupted web presence, Accessible360 has a deep mastery of all facets of accessibility, and includes experts with firsthand knowledge of experiencing the internet through the lens of disability.

Common problems with websites include:

- incompatibility with speech recognition or screen-reading software,
- lack of text-based alternatives to media content,
- poor color contrast or small text size,
- transaction timing requirements that do not take into account intellectual disabilities.

Clients are finding great value in partnering with Accessible360 to make their websites compliant. “Accessible360 stepped in to what was a critical project for us and immediately added value. Their expertise and ability to manage teams through a large and multi-contributor initiative was really impressive,” said Sarah Schieman, Manager, Legal Services, AM Retail Group, Inc. “The accessibility audit their technologists performed was incredibly thorough and everyone involved in this learned a great deal from A360. I've already recommended them and will continue to do so, they do an amazing job.”

“Gathering information, filling out and submit documents, and engaging in ecommerce online have become integral to our society, and it is so important that disabled Americans are not shut out,” said Aaron Cannon, lead accessibility engineer, Accessible360. “These new regulations open the gates of opportunity to internet users who rely on assistive devices to let them see and hear web and mobile content just like everyone else. Accessible360 will bring the same access we see provided in physical buildings to the intangible but crucial spaces of the Internet.”

Accessible360 makes the Internet open to all through website accessibility consulting and services. Its diversified team brings a breadth of experience in accessibility, web development, marketing and technology that follow accessibility directives from courts and the US Department of Justice.

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