OTAN Outreach and Technical Assistance Network for Adult Educators

Working to Make Online Content Accessible

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Did you know that up to 20% of the population is potentially excluded if your website is not fully accessible? That means that people with disabilities will not be able to get information available on your website about your agency and the programs and services that you provide to the community. Not only is this bad for customer service, but it's also bad for business. The gap between federally mandated accessibility guidelines and the reality of many inaccessible company websites has led to a sharp increase in the number of federal ADA non-compliance lawsuits in just the last year, and the projections are to top that number this year.

The best solution is to make your website and online content accessible, but many people are not aware of what this means and what it takes to meet accessibility guidelines. In a recent edition of the 10-Minute Teacher Podcast, instructional designer Bevin Rainwater from the University of Hartford shared some of the important steps to take to make your website accessible.

- Develop a strategic plan to ensure that all of your online content is accessible. This includes any websites, the content that goes on the website, any multimedia content, and content that is stored in a learning management system such as Blackboard, Canvas, or Moodle. Develop a timeline to audit your digital resources and name the people responsible for ensuring accessibility. The plan would also include identifying and acquiring the tools needed to make content accessible.
- Different pieces of content have their own requirements. For example, images require alt-text, videos require captioning and transcripts, and tables need different headers that allow screen readers ways to navigate easily through the data in the tables. One size does not fit all when it comes to meeting accessibility guidelines!
- There are tech tools that can help identify content that is not accessible and suggest corrections. Rainwater mentions two – Ally, which helps make content on websites and in learning management tools accessible, and Ensemble, which helps with closed captioning and creating transcripts. Most tools, however, are not perfect, and still require human review (especially with video) to ensure that captioning and transcripts accurately reflect video content.

At OTAN, we are working hard to educate ourselves on the ins and outs of accessibility and hope to provide more training on accessibility issues in the future. Stay tuned and let us know how we can assist you in making your online content accessible for all of your students, staff, and community members who you serve.

To listen to the 10-Minute Teacher Podcast with Bevin Rainwater:
https://www.coolcatteacher.com/secrets-of-accessible-online-content-you-need-to-know/