Project Manager/Product Owner: Crucial Roles in Accessibility
Introductions

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Michele oversees the strategic product development initiatives focusing on ensuring UsableNet’s services and technologies support clients in their digital accessibility program. Leveraging his 20+ years of experience, Michele is also the co-author of *Content for Everyone: A Practical Guide for Creative Entrepreneurs to Produce Accessible and Usable Web Content.*

Jeff Adams, Vice President - Accessibility Operations, UsableNet
Jeff advises companies around the world on best practices in website accessibility and integrating accessibility into their processes. He’s been with UsableNet for more than a decade and not only consults with UsableNet clients, but also leads the development of the company’s educational programs. In addition, Jeff’s a creative entrepreneur and co-wrote the book *Content for Everyone: A Practical Guide for Creative Entrepreneurs to Produce Accessible and Usable Web Content.*
Agenda

1) Project Manager’s Role
2) Drivers for Web Accessibility
3) Prioritization Mechanisms
4) Two Phases of Accessibility Maturity
5) Mindset switch
6) In Conclusion…
7) Q&A
Project Manager’s Role
Project Manager / Product Owner Responsibilities

- Owns the plan
- Owns the priorities
- Creates awareness
- Sets expectations
- Identifies need of expert support
- Oversees Quality Assurance process
- Owns validation process for 3rd party’s work
- … and other responsibilities as set by the organization
Accessibility Challenges Organizations Face

- It’s not understood by stakeholders
- It’s difficult to perceive
- Can take a lot of time to do
- Requires an investment in training
- Possibly delays other work streams
Drivers for Web Accessibility
Design

- **UI**
  - Use of colours
  - Contrasts
  - Size of elements

- **UX**
  - Reading order
  - Interaction with elements
  - User flow

- 34% of WCAG Success Criteria define **design** requirements
Code

- HTML / Javascript
  - Correct use of elements
  - Appropriate use of attributes
  - Formal correctness of code
  - Creation of appropriate interactions
- CSS
  - Meaningful use of style
- 37% of WCAG Success Criteria define development requirements
Content

- Accessibility of contents is crucial
- Vehicle for
  - Page structure
  - Textual presentation of visual information
  - Clear understanding
- 29% of WCAG Success Criteria define **content** requirements
Prioritization Mechanisms
Not Just a Severity Matter

- There's a strategic aspect in planning well for accessibility
- Need to consider
  - Customer/business impact
  - Legal exposure
  - Development pipeline
Not Just a One Person Decision

- Different stakeholders are responsible to provide guidance on parameters
- Need to consider
  - Customer/business impact – compliance / marketing / business team
  - Legal exposure – Legal / compliance team
  - Development pipeline – digital directors
Difficult to LOE Accessibility Issues

- Could be difficult to determine up front “who needs to do what”…
- … and even more difficult how long is going to take

- Many accessibility aspects will be remediated in a very short time…
- … but there are others that may require a complete refactor
Low Hanging Fruit

- There isn’t a formula that fits everybody
- Remediation involves accessibility involves a deep learning process at multiple levels
- Start building your backlog considering:
  - Issues related to common areas
  - Issue complexity: start with aspects that are easy to understand and easy to fix and easy to re-test
  - Issue severity: privilege the issues that have high impact on the final user experience
Progress Over Perfection

● The first goal is to make progress
● An initial remediation without progress will result into a general de-prioritization of accessibility
● Progress informs plan… and plans will change frequently
  ○ The team will gather expertise
  ○ Fix one – fix many
  ○ Unexpected LOEs (both directions)
Two Phases of Accessibility Maturity
Phase 1: Accessibility as a Project

The main goal is to remediate the existing violations:

- Review audit report
- Identify actions
- Planning the remediation
- Rounds of
  - Development
  - Validation / QA tests
  - Deployment
Phase 2: Accessibility as a Requirement

It connects to the overall “ways of working” in an organization.

- Accessible Design
- Development that satisfies the WCAG requirements.
- Creation of accessible content
- QA including accessibility analysis and testing with assistive technologies
- Testing that involves members of the disability community.
- Release plans that consider also accessibility related metrics
Mindset Switch
It is also about “process”
While fixing it is crucial to keep the focus on preventing regression
Ask the team to focus on the root of the issue
… and identify solutions:
  ○ Training
  ○ Changes at the structural level
  ○ Changes at the backend level
Change the Perception of Accessibility Issues

Didn’t know  ➔  We have bugs
Changes the Perspective of an Issue

- Accessibility issues will happen, just like other bugs happen
- Combine the resolution effort with the root cause analysis
  - Determine why the issue has been introduced (again?)
  - How to prevent it to happen in the future?
    - Training
    - Process
    - Technology
Bring Accessibility as Early as Possible

- Accessibility needs to be injected as early as possible in the digital life cycle.
- Accessibility requirements for a specific phase, represent new inputs to consider in following phases.
- The experience gathered during the remediation informs how to do it:
  - Skills to develop
  - Knowledges to gather
  - Processes to modify
In Conclusion...
Project Manager / Product Owner: Accessibility Cheerleaders

- PM communicates the progress done and its impact.
- This highlights the importance of developing accessibility culture throughout the organization.
- PM needs to understand how to communicate accessibility status to the various stakeholders they work with.
- PM ensures that all projects have accessibility as part of the “definition of done.”
The overarching goal is to form a sustainable accessibility program to maintain accessible digital properties.
Q&A

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Thank You