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Project Manager/Product Owner: Crucial Roles in Accessibility

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1

Introductions

Michele Lucchini, Vice President - Products, UsableNet

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 advices 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

01

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

02

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

03

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

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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

- Remediating 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

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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)

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

05

Mindset Switch

Not Just About Code, Content or Design Fixes

- 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
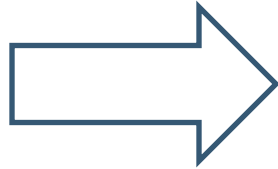
We have bugs

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

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06

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.

07

Q&A

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Thank You