

The Digital Access Show
The Do Better Campaign with David Oram, Belinda Vesey-Brown, Alex Bey, and Kim Amor and Nick Hosking

Intro music:

[00:00:00,287]

Narelle Gatti:

[00:00:21,834] Hi. Welcome to a new episode of The Digital Access Show. This week is slightly different. You've heard us talk in the past, we've talked to people with disability, we've talked to providers, we've talked to auditors about digital accessibility, communication, and why it's so important. This week, we're actually talking to a group called the Do Better group. And I will admit I'm one of the Do Better group, so I'm going to be the one not saying much. I'm just asking the questions today, but I want to introduce you to the Do Better group. We have David Oram from Atomic Web Strategy. We have Belinda Vesey-Brown from Meet Aandi. We have Alex Bey, General Manager of Meet Aandi.

Alex Bey:

[00:01:11,201] Hello, everyone.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:01:13,328] We have Kim Amor and Nick Hosking from KM Website Design. Welcome, everyone, and thank you for coming along. Can you please explain what the Do Better Campaign is? What is Do Better? Belinda?

Kim Amor:

[00:01:28,829] I'll jump in on this one for you, Narelle.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:01:31,222] Thank you.

Kim Amor:

[00:01:33,221] The Do Better Campaign is really about bringing awareness to business owners, small, large, medium, all of those in between. And in particular, we are talking at this stage at the service-based business areas in particular, because at the end of the day, everybody needs to be able to find—

Narelle Gatti:

[00:01:54,618] Oops. Belinda and Alex have dropped out.

Kim Amor:

[00:01:57,924] Dropped off.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:02:01,881] David, is your internet really good?

Nick Hosking:

[00:02:06,289] Alex is back. Belinda is back!

Narelle Gatti:

[00:02:08,893] And Belinda's back. Okay, do we want to start from that part again?

Alex Bey:

[00:02:13,265] Sorry.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:02:13,265] It's not just me.

Alex Bey:

[00:02:16,566] No, Belinda's internet dropped out. So, because we're both in the same place, we both dropped off at the same time. Apologies.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:02:24,527] Okay. No, thank you.

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:02:26,171] It was like Alex spoke and we overloaded it.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:02:32,179] Okay. Okay. So, can you tell us what is the Do Better Campaign?

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:02:41,796] Well, let me jump in on that. I'm Belinda. I'm actually a short blonde woman wearing my black coat today, a little bit chilly. The Do Better Campaign came about from an actual saying that my son had, which was, you know, he used to say all the time, if I did something not so well, he'd say, "Well, Mum, you need to do better." And so, that came about because we see lots of websites around the place that a lot of people don't know that they're creating barriers to how people can use them. And so, that started to, you know, formulate this idea of, well, you know, why don't we get together and use the skills that we have, and let's help people do better.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:03:19,493] Yeah. So why? Why the need to do better? What's the barrier? Kim?

Kim Amor:

[00:03:27,211] There's definitely a space that is overlooked about digital accessibility to services. So, obviously, Narelle experiences it firsthand every day, not being able to necessarily be able to get a hold of a plumber, or the local hairdresser or know where things are located. So, from that side of things, most of us pick up our phone, we use our phones to locate the nearest hairdresser. So, without having good digital accessibility, on

your websites, on your digital services that you have in your businesses, you're actually restricting a whole range of the community, who use their tools and their strategies to locate your business. So, we want to help small, medium, large businesses to actually enhance and do better, as Belinda says.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:04:14,112] Why don't people know about digital accessibility? Belinda?

Kim Amor:

[00:04:21,352] That's a big one.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:04:22,773] Yeah.

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:04:22,773] That is a big one. I think that it's not that they don't know, it's that they don't know that they don't know if that makes sense. I think that there's a lot of, there's not enough awareness about the importance of it. We think about, because we're able-bodied, that everybody is just like us. We don't give it a second thought. And so, it's not intentional. It's literally just, we don't know that we don't know. Well, lots of people don't know that they don't know.

And that's the whole intention behind the Do Better Campaign. Well, how can we help? And together, how can we work together, so that we can just do better for everyone in our community? Because we know that when we make things accessible, it's actually better for everyone.

Narelle Gatti:

[05:05,562] Yeah, that's true.

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[05:05,562] Not just those that, you know, need it.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:05:10,212] And that's so right. And one of the things I'm really wanting to touch on here today is, because between us, we've got some really great web design development people. What is it that needs to be considered when you're designing a website to make it accessible? David, do you have any ideas on that one?

David Oram:

[00:05:33,587] So, there's four key principles around website design, which would be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust. So, in a nutshell, perceivable would mean that web content should be presented in a way that's easy to understand. So, not overcomplicated.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:05:52,805] Yeah.

David Oram:

[00:05:53,887] Operable, navigation should be easy to operate.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:05:57,453] Yeah.

David Oram:

[00:05:58,671] So, that would involve being able to, for example, tab easily in a consecutive order through a website, and to be able to tab to every item that's required. Understandable, the information, and interface operation should be easy to understand. So, that would encompass things like forms.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:06:21,023] Yeah.

David Oram:

[00:06:22,117] Accordions, and that type of content that's in a particular structure. And the last one would be robust, and that means web content should be able to be interpreted by assistive technologies.

And just touching on what Belinda said that maybe people don't know what they don't know, adding to that, maybe people also assume that assistive technologies just take care of it. They can read a website and automatically take care of it. But that's not the case, because a website has to be designed so that the assistive technology can in fact read it properly.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:07:02,637] Yeah. Yeah, and that's true. I suppose I always liken it to the foundations of a house, isn't it? If the foundations of a house are good, the concrete, the footings, the beams, the noggings, the structure of the house, you can make it look whatever way you'd like, but if the foundations are wonky, beams aren't straight, whatever, then the house is going to crumble, isn't it? It's not useful.

David Oram:

[00:07:26,516] Exactly, and at face value you can't see the quality. Yeah.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:07:31,448] Yeah. Yeah, that's a good point. Nick, when you're developing a website, what do you have to consider as the developer?

Nick Hosking:

[00:07:43,216] It comes down to, much what David has already mentioned, that— It's got more than one, like everyone, a lot of people can use a mouse. If you can't see the mouse cursor, then it needs to be able to have a secondary form of navigation. And for a lot of vision impaired people, that becomes your keyboard. As Dave said, it's got to be, you know, able to be tabbed through their news and content, and up page scrolls with

the keyboard arrows. So, we need to make sure that fundamental foundation is built into your website.

But we also have things, all the images for, again, visually impaired people can't see the image on the website, but that shouldn't detract from their experience on your website. So, alt image text plays a huge part in that, so that a somebody who has low or no vision can still get the full experience that someone that doesn't have disability, that, I don't like the word disability but that impairment.

And then you've also got other areas that someone that is deaf, and you need to incorporate everybody into that development side of things. So, you've got to have, if you're playing a piece of music, you've got to have some sort of audible, sorry, visual sign for them to say that there is music playing. So, it's a whole lot of things that you'd build it into to try and include everybody into your website, rather than just someone that can see, speak, and hear. And the other disability, so—

As you mentioned, you're building it from the ground up, so you need to start with your slab or your foundations, and build on each step in so that everybody can understand what the website's about, not just people that don't have an impairment.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:09:38,085] Yeah. And what I also think people don't realise is how being digitally accessible actually helps the SEO.

Nick Hosking:

[00:09:49,458] Very much so.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:09:49,458] Yep.

Nick Hosking:

[00:09:51,591] You can grow your SEO by implementing a lot of the WCAG standards as a whole, because alt image text is a great source of allowing natural keywords into images. And then we all know that search engines are really promoting images and videos as well into that. So, incorporating little aspects of, or incorporating WCAG standards into your website, you're going to naturally increase your SEO visibility.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:10:23,128] Yeah. David, when you're designing the website, do you actually think about digital accessibility then? When do you start thinking about digital accessibility in the project?

David Oram:

[00:10:38,306] It needs to start very early on, to make sure that we don't go down the wrong path to start with. Otherwise, that can obviously add a lot of extra time and unnecessary cost.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:10:49,435] Yeah. Yeah. Alex, one thing I think a lot of people forget is that anything that's downloadable from the website, your PDF documents, Word documents, forms, videos, they've got to be considered too, don't they?

Alex Bey:

[00:11:09,601] Absolutely. And we think about digital content as really being any piece of content that you can access through a computer. So, if you're having a Zoom meeting, having the ability to include captions, having the ability to access that transcript later on. In the link that you send out for someone to get that transcript, that email still needs to be accessible.

If you're communicating with someone, and what we often tell people is if you've got something, if you're going to spend time to say something, you may as well say it to as many people as you can. And the harder you make it for them to hear what you have to say, the less likely it is they're going to listen.

So if we're producing documentation, it needs to work for everyone. And even coming back to that SEO thing, and the mindset of people not knowing what they don't know, what we're really producing with accessible content is, we're making, we generally make information for people. Accessible information, we're almost making it for a computer to understand, so that the computer can then make it work for the person.

And so, that's where the SEO comes in. SEO is driven by computers. It's not driven by people. And so, we need to actually make the content accessible to the computer, so that the computer can make it accessible to everybody else.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:12:45,331] Yeah. One of the myths, and I often hear it living in the vision impaired community, is that PDF cannot be made accessible. What are your thoughts?

Alex Bey:

[00:12:58,098] It definitely can. That doesn't necessarily mean that it is the best platform. There's a few reasons why that myth persists. The first one, I'm going to blame the Department of Health, initially. So, they put out a mandate that literally said, "Making PDF is difficult, and therefore PDFs are not accessible." And they didn't update that for 10 years. And so, a lot of government organizations took that initial guidance in 2010, and assumed technology hasn't changed in the last 15 years, so this must be relevant. And then didn't put effort into it.

The biggest black mark against PDF is mobile. So, PDF is designed specifically to always look the same, regardless of format, which is why it's such a good print format. But taking something that is designed to be on, for an example, an A4 page, and putting it onto a screen that is significantly smaller means that all of the information itself is smaller, and it doesn't respond in the same way that a website does to that screen. So, it is natively more difficult, even for sighted users, to access PDF on mobile.

And as we move into a more mobile-centric way of accessing information, PDF will sort of fall by the wayside in that format. But there is certainly enough markup that can be done to a PDF document to make that information able to be accessed, AKA accessible. But it's not the best way to only provide a PDF and not provide an alternate format.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:14:50,910] Yeah. Yeah. That's true. Thanks, Alex. David, can you give whoever's listening, because we're starting to get a little bit popular, which is great. I'd love to hear some tips from all of you, actually, on what people can do with regards to digital accessibility. I'll start with you, David.

David Oram:

[00:15:14,248] Well, I guess, in terms of choosing a platform to start with, if they're looking to choose a platform to build a website, then WordPress is obviously a great one to start with, because it's reasonably accessible straight out of the box. It's not perfect, but it does cover a lot of, a lot of the issues.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:15:35,898] Yeah.

David Oram:

[00:15:37,708] Another thing is to keep in mind, like, contrast differences when dealing with, you know, text on backgrounds. That's a really common problem that we see, and it's a quick and easy fix. There's lots of online contrast tools to test various colours. And also consider the fonts that you're using from the outset. And also keep an eye on menus as well, cause sometimes menus can be a problem, in terms of clicking through. So, yeah, that's another big issue that we see.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:16:16,551] Yeah. Thanks, David. Kim, your turn. A tip.

Kim Amor:

[00:16:22,611] I think David's covered a lot of them there. They're sort of the major fundamentals.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:16:28,114] Yeah.

Kim Amor:

[00:16:29,021] So, there's the challenge.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:16:31,688] Yep.

Kim Amor:

[00:16:32,865] I think there's definitely, as we're coming into the AI space, there's definitely just consideration as a whole, looking at what plugins, and what sort of extra

features are coming into websites. People can build a lot of things now, cheap and not necessarily accessible. So, if you are obviously in a space where all of your clients need to be able to use their tools to see your website, it's worth getting them checked.

So again, that's where experts like you come into play, who can check over these tools and things, and just make sure that they are relevant and appropriate for where you want to get your clients and the lead and the experience you want them to have on your website.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:17:13,174] Thank you. Nick, your turn. What's a tip from you?

Nick Hosking:

[00:17:18,616] I'd be saying start with the fundamentals. But look at your website as if you were visually impaired, or if you were deaf, because you'll be able to, if you're imagining that you're in that space, you'll then have a better understanding of what needs to be done to create an accessible website.

A lot of people just take it for granted that they've got the, the vision and the speech and the hearing. So, if you put yourself into their shoes, then you'll be able to go, okay, I need, this is an area of improvement I need to focus on. We'll start with the fundamentals and the foundation.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:18:00,334] Yeah. Alex?

Alex Bey:

[00:18:04,607] From, pardon me. So, from like a testing perspective, one of the big things that I often tell people to do is, just try to get where you want to go using only your keyboard. If you want to know whether something can be accessed, if you leave your mouse alone, and see whether you can still get there, and how easily you can get there. Because when we think about facility, we're looking at choice. So, having someone be able to choose whether they want to tab through, or whether they want to click through. And so, they need to be able to do both.

And just to echo one of the earlier points, obviously, directed at you, Narelle, getting individuals who have lived experience to validate what is going on. I know that I personally will do screen reader testing on documents, but that is not the equivalent of having someone who relies on a screen reader to validate it.

So, that saying of "Nothing about us without us," is 100 percent accurate. You don't know that something can be accessed until someone has been able to access it. So, if you've got the ability to access someone with lived experience, do so. And if you don't have the ability, then work on getting the ability to access someone that has lived experience.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:19:31,680] Awesome. Thank you. Belinda, can you—

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:19:35,650] Wow, we've heard some pretty good tips here today. Definitely starting from the beginning and thinking about accessibility. And my tip is it's not only accessibility, it's inclusion. So, while we can make things accessible, we also want to make everyone feel included.

So, with images, the language we use, making sure that we're showing multicultural, making sure that, you know, we're showing different age groups, making sure that we're showing different genders. I think that's, you know, that sort of completes, that's the bow on the top of all these tips today, is that we're not only accessible but we're inclusive as well.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:20:13,162] Yeah, and I'd like to add one comment, and I keep telling people, does anyone know what one of the original purposes for a typewriter is? I know, I think I've mentioned it to all of you, but ever thought about it? A bloke over in Italy, I think it was in 1808, actually built a form of typewriter so that his blind friend could write legibly. Messages—

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:20:36,090] Wow. I didn't know that.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:20:36,090] Wonderful. Yeah. And SMSs. One of the blokes that developed the SMS, your messaging, his wife was deaf. Zooming. Think about it. Your transistors. One of the reasons was so that there was a portable, accessible hearing aid instead of, remember as a kid, you might be a bit young, some of you, but we used to hear the stories of the big trumpet-like horns that people used to hear things.

A lot of innovation has come about because of disability. And what I suppose Do Better is about is harnessing all the innovation that became about because of disability, to help people with disability, help the elderly and help the society as a whole.

I just want to thank you all for coming on. David, how can people get in contact with you, if they want to keep the conversation going? You're based in Melbourne.

David Oram:

[00:21:37,566] Yes, that's right. I'm based in Melbourne. So, the best way would be to visit our website, at atomicwebstrategy.com.au, and either give us a call or send us an email.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:21:50,200] Fantastic. Kim and Nick from KN Website Design. Based in, well, they've

got sites in Toowoomba, Brisbane, and I think Roma. I'm not sure. How do people catch up with you if they want to talk to you about digital accessibility?

Nick Hosking:

[00:22:09,570] So, yeah, as you mentioned, we are based in southeast Queensland and out west. The best way to get in contact with us is through our website, at knwebsitedesign.com, or to shoot us an email at info@knwebsitedesign.com.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:22:27,825] Yeah. Great. Alex. How can people contact you?

Alex Bey:

[00:22:35,138] So, sound like a broken record, visiting the website. So, it is meetaandi, A and I, .com.au. A and I standing for accessibility and inclusion, to help with memorising why it is what it is. And same thing for email in, at info, I-N-F-O, @meetaandi.com.au.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:23:03,143] Yeah. Belinda, because you've got a couple of different hats, haven't you?

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:23:07,815] No, I do. And I just think, just email me at belinda@meetaandi.com.au. If you have any questions, I would love to help.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:23:19,027] What's the future of the Do Better Campaign? What next?

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:23:25,389] Well, we're about to take on the world, Narelle.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:23:29,033] Yep.

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:23:30,113] I think it's one website at a time, I think, you know? We can help identify, we can help mentor, we can help solve, so that we can, one website at a time, starting with allied help. There's a lot of people there that are coming in with some kind of, either a permanent or temporary disability, perhaps, that we can make a massive difference on, and it's about the impact that we can make, I think.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:23:54,233] Yeah. And the website is coming. We just, we're in the process of building it.

Belinda Vesey-Brown:

[00:23:58,710] And the website is coming.

Narelle Gatti:

[00:24:00,215] Website's coming. So, this is the Do Better team, and we are passionate about the work that we're doing. So look if you like what we do, please like, subscribe, share, review. Give us five stars. I would love a five-star review of The Digital Access Show, because it's all about getting the message out about digital accessibility, the importance of communication, and the importance of society being inclusive. So, yeah, I'm Narelle, and we'll see you on the next show. Thank you.

Outro music:

[00:24:31,686]