

[music playing]

[Narelle] Morning.

Welcome to this week's episode  
of the Digital Access Show.

David Oram,  
from Atomic Web Strategy,

has been on the show before,

and I've asked David to come  
back on for a couple of reasons.

David, thank you.  
Thank you for being here.

[David] Thanks, Narelle.

[Narelle] David,

you're part of the  
Do Better Campaign.

What is the Do Better Campaign?

[David] So the Do Better campaign  
is to create more awareness of...

WCAG accessibility.

And it's a coalition of  
businesses that are trying to...

get the message out there,

that accessibility  
should be by default,

not an afterthought.

So, that's the gist of it.

[Narelle] Why'd you get involved  
in digital accessibility?

You've got a very  
successful business,

building, designing websites.

Why did you add  
digital accessibility?

[David] Well,

part of what we do is  
search engine optimisation,

and accessibility is a  
core component of that.

So from a business  
point of view,

it makes sense to do that,

in order to improve,

you know, search rankings,

but also just to help people,

and to make websites more  
accessible to everybody.

That's a win-win for  
consumers and businesses.

[Narelle] So, the  
Do Better Campaign,

mixed with digital  
accessibility,

is really about just improving  
communication for everyone?

[David] Absolutely. Absolutely.

[Narelle] So,

what does implementing  
it then mean to you if it's...

improving communication?

How does it...

improve your life?

[David] Well, I guess,

in terms of what  
it actually means,

from our point of view,

it means we...

treat it as a process,

not as a project,  
not an afterthought.

So, it's something that we  
think about from the outset.

So, that includes thinking about  
the design in terms of colour,

contrast,

consistency of components,

focus points and  
things like that.

We also think about how we're  
using semantic HTML and ARIA.

We try to use semantic HTML...

primarily,

and only rely on ARIA  
where it's absolutely needed.

And we're always thinking about  
adding alt text for images,

using tools to conduct testing,

and yeah, just making sure that...

everything is fully accessible,

so that it's open to everybody.

[Narelle] From what  
I can understand,

you incorporate it in  
your whole process,

no matter what happens  
with what website,

every website's  
built with it now?

[David] I wouldn't say that.

It does add some  
additional cost...

to go about it in this way.

And for some clients,

that may not make  
sense for a smaller client.

It also depends on the market as  
well that they're involved in.

But as a general rule,

it is something that we  
would like to consider

for every web  
development that we do.

[Narelle] Okay.

Can I ask you to  
explain a bit more about,

you were talking  
semantic HTML and ARIA.

Can you explain  
what they are, please?

[David] Well, ARIA...

is a tag that you can add

that...

helps the screen readers  
read out information.

They're obviously useful,

but it's much better to  
have semantic HTML...

being able to do that,

because the ARIA  
tags only deal with...

what the screen  
readers read out,

not the actual structure.

So, it's always better to have...

the semantic HTML first,

because that's what  
adds the keyboard support,

not the ARIA tags.

[Narelle] Okay, so semantic  
HTML is the actual structure

that you would  
use for any website,

to build a website?

[David] Yeah. That's correct.

[Narelle] ARIA is some extra  
information that can be added in.

[David] That's right.

So where semantic  
HTML falls short,

we could use ARIA

to fix those issues.

[Narelle] Yep.

What...

What are the...

platforms that you  
use then, David?

I mean, if we think about  
something like Shopify or...

I think Squarespace,

WordPress, Wix,

or even straight,

you know, PHP or  
like Visual Studio.

What are the platforms that...

allow you to easily incorporate  
digital accessibility,

and what are the ones  
that you just say, oh, no,

that doesn't work real well?

[David] Most of the platforms  
are starting to think about it,

in terms of incorporating  
accessibility.

Our platform of choice  
would always be WordPress.

There's a lot of  
thought that's gone into...

WordPress for accessibility,

and that tends to be the  
best straight out of the box.

There's plenty of accessible  
templates that are available.

Where they run into problems is  
when humans become involved,

and start playing  
around with page filters,

and start adding  
structure that way.

That's where things, you know,  
go off the rails a little bit.

But in terms of  
the platforms itself,

WordPress would be  
our platform of choice.

[Narelle] I understand  
WordPress has what they call,

"page builders and themes."

Can you talk a  
little bit about that,

and what are the page  
builders that are good?

What are the page  
builders that cause issues?

And the same with themes.

[David] So the best...

page builders at the moment  
would probably be Elementor,

and Divi.

[Narelle] Yep.

[David] There's a number of themes that have been developed

that are specific for those page builders.

For example, Astra and the Hello Elementor theme.

[Narelle] Yep.

[David] Using those is a great starting point for accessibility.

But like I mentioned,

it can go off the rails

when humans start playing around with those page builders,

not knowing what they're doing.

You know, they can add in a H2 tag,

and then after that add a H1 after it,

things like that.

The page builder won't stop them from making those mistakes.

But out of the box, they are pretty good.

[Narelle] What are common errors that you're seeing at the moment

that are simple ones that anyone can fix?

[David] Probably the most common one would be contrast actually.

Having text on a background that doesn't have enough contrast.

I mean, it's an easy fix.

There's lots of online tools for contrast checking.

So, that's generally an easy fix.

Also, structure.

The wave tool quite  
often picks up that,

in terms of having headings  
that are out of order.

So having a H3 and  
then a H1 after that.

[Narelle] Okay. Yep.

[David] So, that's  
pretty common.

Also forms,

with missing labels  
and things like that.

Buttons and links, actually.

People still quite often  
will have like read more,

or click here as  
the text for a link,

which doesn't give information  
as to where it's going.

[Narelle] And it's quite a worry

in today's world, isn't it?

Because do you necessarily  
want to follow something

that just says click here?

[David] Yeah,  
that's true. That's true.

[Narelle] Yeah.

So,

with these errors,

are those errors  
also in the content?

Because from my understanding,

and yeah, I am a coder,

but I'm not a web developer  
or anything like that.

You would build the website,

and you would  
then add the content,

the contents, the words  
and everything else.

Is that where a lot of the  
errors come from then,

when people add the content?

If you've got a site that you've  
said, yeah, it's accessible?

[David] Yeah, exactly.

When people start  
getting involved

and adding content themselves  
without having understanding,

it's very easy for them to  
make silly errors like that.

[Narelle] Yeah, okay.

So what can people do to...

ensure that their  
content is accessible?

Because isn't that,  
at the heart of it,

what we do on a website,  
which is create a media,

where people can  
find out about you?

[David] I guess that's what  
the Do Better campaign is about,

to get the word out there,

because people,

they don't know  
what they don't know.

So, they're not  
aware of the fact that,

you know, having click here is...

not accessible,

because they've probably never  
really given it any thought.

So, we need to get that  
awareness out there,

so people are

thinking about this.

[Narelle] Yeah.

Are these areas  
platform dependent,

or is it just a general problem?

[David] More of a  
general problem.

Like I said, lots of platforms  
have given some thought...

to accessibility.

So out of the box, it's not  
that they're inherently bad.

It's that you can make them bad  
once you start playing around,

and adding content  
and structure to it.

[Narelle] Yeah.

So,

in all of this,

as a web developer,

what's your most  
frustrating part about it?

What do you look at and think,

you know, come on, guys.

[David] I guess the most  
frustrating part would be...

seeing a website  
where clearly no thought

and effort has  
gone in at the start.

And they've made errors

that are just consistent all  
the way through the website.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[David] So, that's  
the frustrating thing.

[Narelle] And it is a  
common problem, is it?

[David] Yeah,  
you do see it a lot.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Narelle] One of the things  
I'm interested to find out is,

and yes, I am a digital  
accessibility auditor.

People seem to...

audit the website themselves,

look at the website and  
say, oh, it's accessible.

Why do they do that?

[David] They've run automated  
tools across the website.

And it's given them  
maybe a clean bill of health,

but those tools  
can only go so far.

They're not the gold standard.

They're just like  
a rule of thumb.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[David] They're a  
good guide, but...

yeah, they just don't  
touch on all of the aspects

that only a human can  
actually, you know, test for.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[David] So it's  
always important,

and essential to have...

a professional  
auditor complete that.

[Narelle] Is it a bit like when  
you go and look at a house,

buying a new house

you make sure the  
doors open and close,

and the taps turn on and off?

Is that what these tools do?

[David] Yeah, I guess so.

They can check that the  
tap can turn off and on,

but they can't check the...

structure of the pipes and  
what condition the pipes are in.

Only a human can do that  
by crawling under the house.

[Narelle] Which is why you get a  
building professional to do a...

report, don't you,

if you go and buy a house  
or something like that.

So, what's the average cost  
of a standard website today?

It'd be quite a  
fair bit of money.

[David] Oh, it's hard  
to put a number on it.

It really does depend  
on the functionality,

and the size and the  
amount of content.

[Narelle] Yeah.

What are some takeaways?

What's some advice?

Well, actually, even  
take a step back.

With all this in mind,

is that why you joined  
the Do Better Campaign?

What made you join  
the Do Better Campaign?

[David] I think it's  
a great initiative

to get the word out there,

so that people are  
starting to think about this.

[Narelle] Yeah.

Is it happening, do you think?

Is the word out there? Yeah?

[David] Slowly, I  
think it's happening.

I think,

like, government  
departments and organisations,

and charities and  
things like that,

are starting to think about it.

But clearly a lot more  
work needs to be done,

because they aren't there yet,

but at least, you know,

they're starting

to think about it.

[Narelle] Yeah.

What's some takeaways,  
David, that you can give people,

with regards to the...

digital accessibility and  
websites and content?

[David] Well, I would say,

you know, thinking about  
it from the outset is key.

Doing it as an afterthought  
makes it a lot harder.

[Narelle] Yep.

[David] In terms of  
the technical side,

use semantic HTML  
where possible.

And ARIA should only be  
the glue that holds it together,

not the actual,  
not used for structure.

[Narelle] Yep.

[David] And...

Once you've  
finished the website,

test it with your keyboard,  
see if you can tab through it.

[Narelle] Yeah.

Quite often people  
don't think about that.

So, and if they'd  
done that simple test,

they would've seen a problem  
with their menu, for example.

That's quite often  
an issue that pops up.

[Narelle] Yeah.

Think about the content  
that you've written.

Do all the images have alt text?

PDFs,

they're quite often  
not accessible,

but they can be made accessible.

So, thoughts should  
be given to that,

to things that are  
downloadable as well.

[Narelle] Yeah.

David,

I'm a business.

I've come to you and said,

actually, let's make it...

I'm an NDIS Allied  
Health business.

I'm a speech therapist.

And I've come to you  
and said, oh, David,

I need a new website.

This is what I want.

What do...

Do you mention digital  
accessibility to them?

What do you say?

How do you say to them?

If you're...

a person that has,

as your clients,  
people with disability,

you should have  
digital accessibility.

What can people do?

[David] In that instance,

clearly their target

audience does require...

an accessible website.

So if they go down the path  
of an inaccessible website,

they're pretty much  
blocking their target audience.

So, that doesn't make  
any sense whatsoever.

So, we'd definitely  
be trying to...

convince them of the  
importance of accessibility.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[David] It makes total sense  
for them to invest in that.

[Narelle] Yeah.

David, thank you.

I always love chatting to you.

If you want to talk to David,

what's the best way to keep  
in contact with you, David,

or to find out more about  
the Do Better Campaign?

[David] The best way  
would be to visit our website,

[atomicwebstrategy.com.au](http://atomicwebstrategy.com.au).

[Narelle] Thanks, David.

Thank you so much  
for your time today,

and we'll catch you later  
on the Digital Access Show.

If you like what we do on  
the Digital Access Show,

please like,

subscribe, review, share it.

We love feedback,  
good, bad and ugly.

And we'll see you

next time. Bye, bye.

[music playing]