[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?

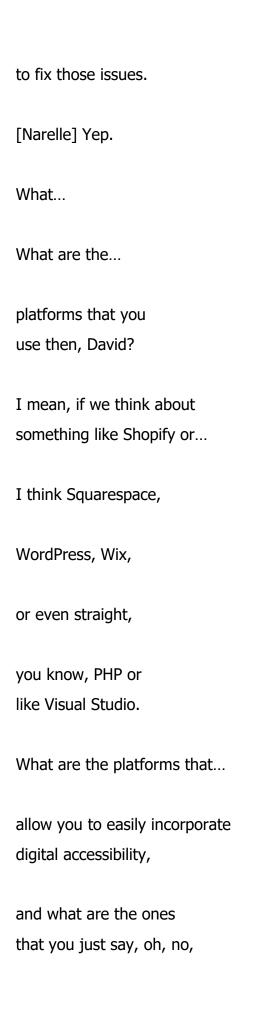
[David] Yeah. That's correct.

[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



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,

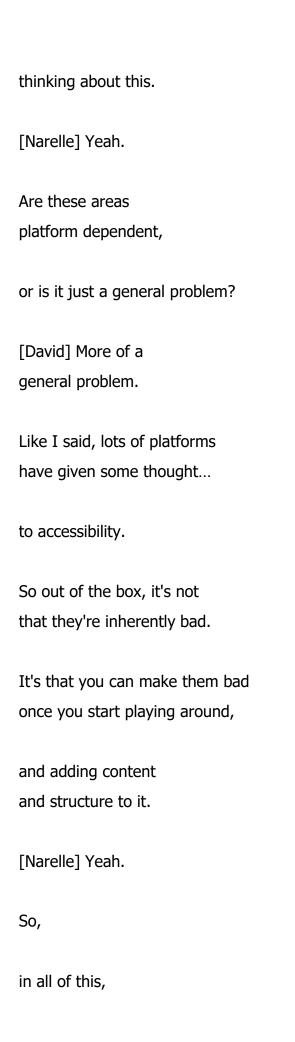
you know, having click here is...

not accessible,

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

So, we need to get that awareness out there,

so people are



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.

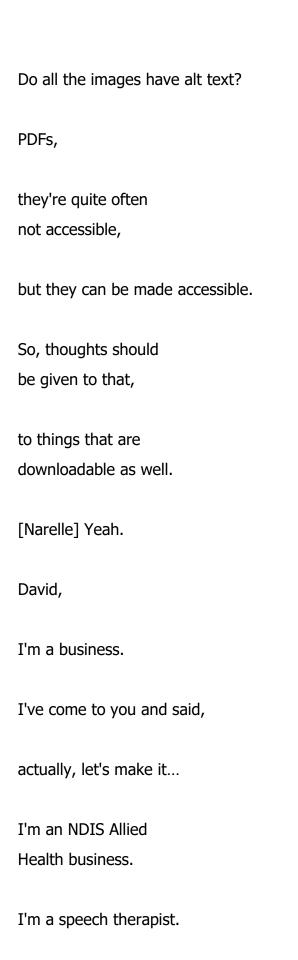
So, and if they'd done that simple test,

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.



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.

[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]