The Digital Access Show

Season 3, Episode 5 — Guest: Nick Hosking

[Intro music]

Narelle:

Hello. Welcome to yet another episode of *The Digital Access Show*.

In the past, we've talked about the Do Better Campaign and doing better in ensuring your websites and documents are all accessible.

One of the questions our guest gets asked is: *How do you know when the tools you're using are going to do what you need them to do?*

Our guest is **Nick Hosking** from **KN Website Design**, part of the Do Better Campaign.

Nick, thanks very much for coming on.

Nick:

Thank you for having me, Narelle.

Choosing CMS Platforms

Narelle:

Nick, I've been asked a question a lot lately.

You go to someone, and they say, "Use Wix or WordSpace… or Shopify."

They're all content management systems to build your website. They say they're easy and meet the standards.

How do you know if they've got the accessibility tools built in?

Nick:

A lot of them *say* they do accessibility.

Like any business, they claim to be the best in their niche.

Wix, Weebly, Webflow… many are stagnant CMSs where you can't bolt on elements. They're rigid.

That makes it difficult to get full accessibility.

It's like asking a plumber to bring only a hammer.
He might fix something, but it's not going to do everything.

We predominantly use **WordPress**, because you can add functionality and improve accessibility by adding elements.

WordPress itself is not always accessible — but you can add the accessibility aspects to create a site that's visible for everybody.

Evaluating CMS Options

Narelle:
So if someone is choosing between Weebly, Shopify, Wix, and WordPress — what's the *first* thing they should check?

Nick:
First: **Why are you choosing that CMS?**
What's the purpose? Who's the audience?

Shopify is an e-commerce platform — you shouldn't use it for a trade-based or service website.

WordPress has many elements you can add to support accessibility.
Vision-impaired users often prefer online shopping, so accessibility is essential.

Wix? I'm not a fan.
It's really designed for first-time DIY website owners.
As a whole — not accessible.
Even adding alt-text is not easy for non-tech users.

If I rank the four:

1. **Wix** — bottom

2. **Shopify** — limited for anything beyond shopfront

3. **Weebly** — improving

4. **WordPress** — gold standard

Page Builders: Elementor, Gutenberg, Divi, etc.

Narelle:

So we've chosen WordPress.

Next step: the page builder.

How do you choose between Divi, Elementor, Gutenberg, etc.?

Nick:

I've done a lot of research.

- **Gutenberg** comes with the WordPress core.

- You can add other page builders.

WPBakery is more code-heavy.

I look at *how heavy* a page builder is — meaning its storage size and load impacts.

The heavier the plugin, the slower the website.

We choose **Elementor** because it's lightweight but powerful.

It offers AI-driven accessibility helpers such as auto-generated alt text.

Why Use a Theme?

Narelle:

Why use a theme at all?

Nick:

A theme is the **framework**.

WordPress core is the foundation.

Page builders are the walls and interior.

The theme is the structure—bricks, mortar, layout, menus.

WordPress has thousands of themes.

We've tested many and found **Astra** to be the best:

- Clean

- Accessible

- Lightweight

- Customizable

- Works well with Elementor

Accessibility Within Themes

Narelle:

When you say Astra is accessible, do you mean accessibility is built in?

Nick:

Yes.

For example, Astra allows **global customization**:

- H1, H2, H3 hierarchy

- Predetermined styles

- Helps screen readers and users relying on visual structure

Buttons are also built with accessibility in mind — you just define their purpose.

No theme is 100%, but Astra gets close.

Issues with Themes Claiming Accessibility

Narelle:

I looked at Thrive the other day.
It said it was accessible — but it wasn't.
How does a developer manage that?

Nick:

Developers often don't know what they don't know.
A product claims accessibility, so they believe it.

Ask your developer:

- Are you an accredited accessibility web developer?

- What tools are you using?

- What guidelines do you follow? (WCAG A, AA, AAA)

Even Astra can be made non-accessible if you use optional features like sticky headers, which confuse screen readers.

Changing Themes After the Fact

Narelle:

If someone picks the wrong theme, how hard is it to switch?

Nick:

Theme-to-theme isn't hard.

You must check every page, but it's manageable.

Changing **page builders** (e.g., Divi → Elementor) is where things break.

Divi works best only with itself.

Always ask:

- Is my page builder congruent with my theme?

If you're not confident in your developer, consider another one.

Advice Before Choosing Tools

Narelle:

What other advice would you give people?

Nick:

Know how you want your site structured.

Clients often say, "We don't know — that's why we hired you."

But having a vision makes building accessibility in from the start much easier.

If we add it later, recoding may accidentally break accessibility.

Contact Information

Narelle:

How can people reach you?

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Wrap-Up

Narelle:

Thanks, Nick.

I always enjoy our conversations.

If you like what we do, please like, subscribe, and review.

You can find our podcast episodes on YouTube and at **dasat.com.au**.

We'd love your feedback.

See you next time on *The Digital Access Show*.

[Outro music]