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The Digital Access Show

Season 3, Episode 41 | Do Better Access

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Welcome and Introductions

Narelle: Hello, and welcome to the second last show for The Digital Access Show. We've had some phenomenal guests on, and I've been really lucky to have our three guests this year. One of, well, I'm part of that team actually, have come on a few times to talk about different things related to digital accessibility, digital marketing, good communication, and what can be done and what needs to be done to improve. This show, this time, is more of a reflection of where we've been, and what have we learned. I'd like to introduce you to David Oram from Atomic Web Strategy. Hi David.

David: Hi Narelle.

Narelle: Kim Amor, and Nick Hosking from KN Website Design, and Vigor Graphics. I would like to mention Vigor Graphics won the Small Business… Awards for this year, so congratulations, Kim and Nick, and thank you for being here.

Kim: Thanks, Narelle. Been a great year.

Nick: Yes, I reflect on that too.

Narelle: Yeah. It's been an interesting year for us. We did start the year with… Belinda Vesey-Brown, and Belinda's work took her in another direction, and she is missed. Yeah, Belinda gave a lot of… different knowledge that we miss. But we know Belinda's doing some wonderful things. If you want to find out what she's doing, look up Coach Aandi. And that's Aandi. It's a fantastic program. So, where have we come from? David, where did we start the year this year?

Reflecting on the Year and Team Collaboration

David: Well, we've certainly come a long way this year. There's been a number of different projects that we've worked on. And I think we've really improved in terms of… our internal workflows, on how to work collaboratively. So, yeah, that would be one of the biggest… things that we've achieved this year.

Narelle: I agree with you. I think one of the things that… has made us such a good team… is the way we are all willing to… work together and learn from each other. I mean, I'm definitely not a coding guru. I would go to you or I would go to Nick straight off. What are your thoughts with that?

David: Yeah. I mean, definitely. So, when it comes to… the auditing side, I wouldn't pretend to be an expert in that. I would always defer that to yourself.

Narelle: Yeah.

David: But yeah. Definitely, the, the coding is something that Nick and I excel in.

Narelle: And we're really lucky we've got Kim on board, because Kim is really the marketing person. She really understands about keywords, and you and Kim work really together with the keywords, and all of that stuff that make the SEO, and the AI optimisation, and everything else work really well for websites.

Kim: I think we've definitely… all ramped that up a bit together as well. Again, David, David, Nick and I, our skills overlap in a lot of areas. As you mentioned earlier, they do overlap in many ways that… websites and the foundation, and the coding and the keywords, and… AI SEO is another thing that we're collaborating on. And I think that's the great thing. When you bring the minds together, it means that the final product ultimately for our clients… has all this extra goodness on top of it. So, yeah, there's definitely that layer that has appeared. Then obviously, having Narelle's expertise on top of that… has just made the year… work really well. The results are with our clients that we've had successes with.

Narelle: Yeah, and we've been really lucky, I think, with our clients this year. We haven't done a lot, but we've done quality. Don't you agree there, Nick?

Nick: One hundred percent. It's not, when it comes to the digital space, there's a lot involved. And it's not, like, you don't want to put out… a thousand websites at a low quality, so it's about helping the people that need to be helped. And that ranges from full website rebuilds through to… advisory on apps and portals, and how to get them… through the accessibility, and essentially to market… to help their target audiences.

Project 1: Going Daily Assisted Transport

Narelle: Yeah. If we start with the first website that we did as a group, was the Going Daily Assisted Transport. That was a fun one, but it was slightly different, wasn't it? David, you took the coding lead on that one. What was different about it… with the coding?

David: I would say what was different about it was… it all went pretty smoothly in the way that… each… party contributed to it, it was a smooth workflow. I think we learned a bit from that in terms of the workflow, but it definitely went really, really well, which made our job in the coding area that little bit easier.

Narelle: And that one was designed by Belinda Vesey-Brown, and she did a wonderful job in the design of it, and getting ideas and collating them together for you, David.

David: Yeah, yeah, that's right. So, took some of the guesswork out of it, which made our part a little bit faster… to get it completed. Yeah.

Narelle: An interesting things that came out of that project… was that plug-in that you had to put in, cause we had a bit of work with that particular vendor, didn't we? I can't remember the name of the plug-in, but it was to be, Going Daily Assisted Transport is all about people with disability… being able to book transport themselves. So, if I go and book a taxi, and everyone knows I can't see very well, and I don't use the app. It is just… painful for me. So, I have to rely on voice. And one of my big issues is my name. Most, Siri really don't get my name very well. I blame my parents for that. But it's also more of the fact that… you could have a weird… street name, and it is really hard… with voice to sometimes get that across. And in the end, you have to stand there and keep saying operator. So, this takes all that pain away, doesn't it, that particular plug-in?

David: I remember there was some concerns about it initially. There was some accessibility issues, but the… the developers at their end were able to make some changes that improved on that. So, yeah, that was a problem that was solved, otherwise we would have needed to exclude that from the audit, I think, if they hadn't made that change. So, that was great.

Narelle: Do you remember the name of those vendors, David?

David: Not off the top of my head.

Narelle: No, I don't either.

David: It was something that we couldn't fix cause we couldn't access the code due to the way it was implemented. We were definitely reliant on them to have to make that change. And the flexibility and the way they actually really, once they realised, they were really on board. And it was great because now there is an actual app, where we can actually go and book transport. And for many people, it might not seem much. But you know what? When you're standing there at 10 o'clock at night… on a street by yourself… trying to get… 13cabs or black and white taxis, or whatever taxi service you use, to understand what you're saying, it actually can be quite scary. So, this… app and what's being built takes away that issue. So, that's a big win, I think. What do you think, Kim, Nick?

Kim: Anything that makes life easier. At the end of the day, this is, we want to help people. So, yeah, definitely a win. And again, there's that collaboration again. It wasn't necessarily within our group. We've actually taken that outside, and hopefully educated the app developers and… some other people along the way. And I think that's the real key to… what we're trying to achieve here, is just awareness and education, that the little details do make a difference.

Narelle: Yeah. So, that's goingdaily.com.au is the website, isn't it?

Nick: Yes.

Project 2: Hai Helper

Narelle: Yeah. The next one. The next one was an interesting one. Hai Helper. Cause we put in a lot of different… expressions of interest and things. And we've had many meetings, and some stuff's been put on the back burner, so it might happen next year. But, Nick, do you want to give us a bit more information about Hai Helper and what they're doing? Without giving all the secrets away, because I think they want to keep some stuff secret.

Nick: So, Hai Helper is an… app or platform… where participants can sort of… have a bit more control… When I say, the NDIS participants have a little bit more control… over their funding, and that side of things. So, we worked with… Sam from Hai Helper to… help him iron out some of the accessibility issues that he… didn't know about, or that his team weren't aware they were barriers. And we helped develop a… roadmap, I guess you could say, to help him get it to market… in an accessible platform. Do you want to add anything, David? Because we worked on this one together.

David: Yeah, no, that's the gist of the platform. That was an interesting project for us. So, we had a couple of our team members, Nick and I, working on this. One of them was visually impaired. The other one was not. And it was really interesting to get their reports back, because they came at it at different angles. And I think the end product report that we were able to give Hai Helper was a lot stronger for it. Because I think there were issues there that were picked up that, you know, technically they were a fail, yet the accessible technology was able to get through without… any issues around that. So, it's interesting seeing it from both those angles.

Narelle: That's one of the things developers don't see, do they? Because they don't know what they don't know.

Nick: Yep. That doesn't just go, that's everybody. There's a lot of things that people don't know. And we've been doing it for the last 50 years, but… they don't realise that they need to evolve and… standards do change.

Project 3: Care Done Differently

Narelle: Yeah. That's definitely it. And the last project, that's just been released not long ago, was Care Done Differently. Kim, what was brilliant about that one? It was a fun project.

Kim: I'm gonna throw this one back over to Nick, because he actually had a lot more involvement.

Narelle: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah, on this one.

Nick: So, again, Belinda was also involved still with this one. She did a lot of the… the wireframe, I guess you could say, and then we implemented that into the design, into the… the CMS, and the accessibility of everything to work in. We did have a couple of hiccups just, again, between… Belinda and ourselves, just… more at what was expected from each of us. And… But overall, it went successfully. We've got a client that's happy with the outcome, and… I know that it's doing what it needs to do. It's educating her, allowing her… end user to navigate the website in an accessible manner. And one of the things that's different with what Hanah does, is Hanah deals with… people with many mental health issues, neurodivergent, and they get really, really frustrated if they can't find something really quickly. They're liable to go, move on, do something else. So, she really needed a very responsive, very… in-your-face website, and I think it's been achieved.

Nick: Yes, it's just, it's definitely, It's… lightweight. So, it will give you that speed to load, but it still gives the information that it needs to give to… a wide range of users. And this is where… a lot of websites are built with one person in mind, but we come at it with a multiple different… users in mind, be it the blind, be it the autistic, be it… a normal, loosely to use that word normal, but… someone without a disability. So, we come at it at different areas to go, well, yes, we're going to, X, Y and Z will suit this person, but you need to also think about… the other people that are using the website, so.

Kim: It's that full accessibility factor. Like, again, we have an awareness that… often a lot of web developers don't have… that just gives us this… different approach. So, where some of the other industry… people are taking web development and digital accessibility and, again, comes back to that whole team effort, and sharing what we know… amongst each other to get the best results.

Evolving Technology and Keeping Websites Current

Narelle: Yeah. And I think one of the funny things that… has come out of the year for me, and I'm still laughing about it, is the Meta Ray-Ban glasses, and I know that really hasn't… affected you three, because… well, you hopefully don't use them, but the Meta Ray-Ban glasses actually came from… disability. The actual, one of the original ideas, and I used one of the original ideas, and now it's… like so much other stuff, it's being taken on by and used by everyone. And that's really what we're saying with everything, with disability and with digital accessibility, isn't it, that… things evolve.

Nick: In today's day and age, a website's old at two years.

Narelle: Yeah.

Nick: That's going to get quicker, and get shorter and shorter, so. In the future, you'll need to update your website every year. But it's…

Kim: It's where our partnership with our clients comes into play. Having ongoing educated web developers on your team. For us, that's a no-brainer, because we're keeping up so we can keep our clients up with it.

in unison: Yeah.

How Accessibility Has Changed Our Work

Narelle: It's going to be interesting in the next year to see where the Do Better Access team go, because we are out there. And all we're really doing is saying to… every NDIS provider, every website… owner, builder, build your accessibility in, because who are you missing? I don't know whether… Yeah. David, do you think, like, we've been working on this project 18 months now? It's about 18 months, 12 months, 18 months. Do you think… it's changed the way you code, on reflection, to what you did 18 months ago?

David: Definitely. It's always in the back of my mind, the accessibility implications of how we code. So, yeah, definitely. It's always there. Yep.

Narelle: What's the thing you do differently now, Kim?

Kim: It's definitely, obviously, I'm coming at it more from a design perspective, particularly when I work with the social media channels. So, I'll swing it a little bit that way. But, again, it's just the simple things, like alt image text, larger font sizes. Again, there's no point having lots and lots of text on an image that doesn't have any alt image, let alone be visually appealing to someone. Even I've got glasses. So, from that perspective, and colour contrast, I guess, has always been a part of our web development process. But it's really just elevated that to be… that next stepping stone of… how visually appealing is the artwork that we're creating, and the messaging, and how are the descriptions in our socials? And even hyperlinks. It's a standard web development process, but providing that information… easily within our social media channels, so that if people are interested, everything is hyperlinked. And not only helping the Google bots and the SEO, but it's helping the humans to that next level as well.

Narelle: What difference has it made to you, Nick?

Nick: Essentially, it's making… There's a lot of things you can do on a website to make it look… pretty. I use inverted commas when I say pretty, but a lot of the… pretty elements are not accessible. So, if you have something that… flips on your website or… comes in from the sides, or like, they may look appealing, but… it's not often accessible. And even with someone, I've got reasonably good eyesight, I don't like it. So, I remember looking at a website… earlier this year, all their call to actions were bouncing, vibrating, and trying to get the attention. I knew what the idea behind… the button was, but… if it's built properly, the flow on to that call to action should be natural anyway, that you don't need to be… jumping it out at the screen. People should want to click that button, not because it's doing something.

Lessons Learned and Key Messages for Next Year

Narelle: Yeah. I remember that. I'd forgotten that. That was an interesting website, that one. And actually, I couldn't look at that website. I think I had to ring one of you up and say, you're going to have to do this, I can't do it. I couldn't look at it because of the… colour combinations, the movement. It was virtually inaccessible for me. And I think that's the message that… I've learned over the last 18 months. Other than the fact of… the coding and different techniques of coding that I've learned from the two of you, different ways of reporting things made a difference for me, and… a different way of thinking, and a different perspective. And I think that's made the difference overall, which is why… we're doing better with the access. What's the key message for next year, David?

David: Keep moving forward. Keep learning, because there's always new technology coming out that we need to keep on top of. And keep an eye on the… the next version of WCAG as well, which will be… out in the near future, I believe. So, yeah.

Narelle: Yeah. Three or four years, yeah. Kim, what about you?

Kim: I'll back David on that one. Just keeping up with the changes. They're so quick. So, let's stay on top of them so that, again, we're producing best results for our clients. You see, I'm always that outcome. Let's see what are we driving forward for our people, and let's get that message out to everybody that this stuff… doesn't need to be scary. It just needs to be done correctly and with high quality, which is, I guess that's the same message. So, we'll take that one forward as well.

Narelle: Nick?

Nick: I'm going to take it differently, and I'm gonna… go, let's get the sledgehammer out and knock down the walls.

Narelle: Oh, I love it. [Narelle laughs]

Nick: Because every website should be accessible.

Kim: Bottom line.

Nick: Bottom line. It's not a… It's not a nice to have. It's a requirement, I believe.

Narelle: 10-pound sledgehammer.

Kim: Narelle loves that.

Nick: Whatever it…

Nick: Whatever works.

Kim: Whatever works.

Nick: A hatchet to a 10-pound sledgehammer to… a bulldozer.

Closing Thoughts

Narelle: Yeah. And for me going forward, it's, I have to keep up with the technologies. Obviously, for me, it's vision impairment related, because that's changing so quickly. I mean, the Meta Ray-Ban glasses. Last week, I had on the podcast Anne Hyslop and Sarah Evans, and they went to Croatia, both… One with no sight, one with only 25 percent sight, and they did it successfully… with Meta Ray-Ban glasses. So, it's keeping up with that technology. And learning, just because I can do it one way, there'll be another way that I can do it more efficiently. And it's being out in the community as well, so that people can see… that… people with disability, we're just out there like everyone else. And we need the access to information. So, our team is the Do Better Access team. The website is dobetteraccess.com.au. David, will you be able to provide the name of that vendor that we worked with with Going Daily? I'd love to put that up at the end of the podcast as well. They're a wonderful team, and thank you to them. Thank you so much to Belinda Vesey-Brown with the work that you've done. And David, Kim, Nick, thank you. It's been a wonderful year, and we're going to have a better year doing Better Access. So, this is The Digital Access Show. If you like what we do, like, share, subscribe. Tell us where we can do better. Everyone can always do better. And we'll see you next week on the last show of The Digital Access Show for 2026. See you then. Bye-bye. [music playing]