

[Music] [Narelle] Hi and welcome to our next edition of The Digital Access Show. Today, I want to introduce you to a guy that we've done a bit of work with and we absolutely love working with David, David Oram is from Atomic Web Strategy. David is based in Melbourne and hello David. [David] Hi Narelle, thanks for having me. [Narelle] Well, thanks for coming David. I have actually stuffed up this is the second time we've tape this podcast, because I had a computer problem and you know the second one's never going to be as good as the first. So I apologise, David. David, can you tell us a bit about yourself? What you do? [David] So I've been in IT for over 10 years. Originally, started it out in the search marketing game. We were originally working in partnership with Yahoo at one point and when Yahoo pulled out of Australia, I then moved on to web development and providing those services to clients. Specializing in WordPress. That is the most popular CMS and also great CMS for WCAG accessibility. So we chose to specialize in that area. The services that we mostly provide website maintenance, a design, rebuilding of websites, SEO services and of course accessibility. [Narelle] What is it with WordPress that makes it a good tool for you to use with everything that you're doing? Is, What is the attraction? [David] Well, other than the fact that it's extremely popular, I think it powers over 60% of websites now. It's also that ease of use and the availability of software because it's an open source platform. So there's lots and lots of options for adding functionality to websites. Both free and paid versions of various plugins, wide variety of themes and also some great page builders. Especially, over the last few years the the page builder software has improved dramatically. We first saw, Divi come along which was groundbreaking and then Elementor came along which seems to have overtaken Divi. Which makes it a lot easier, not only for us but also for the end user. thatt means that our clients can now update their own website. Certainly, in terms of page content like text and images, and things like that. Makes it so much easier for them. Whereas in the past with the classic editor, I mean that was quite challenging for them. Supposedly, easy but when they actually try to do it without a technical knowledge, it was yeah, proves to be a little bit too hard and then having to pay for maintenance and simple things like that. [Narelle] So WordPress, you can bring in the SEO quite easily through WordPress as well. All the other things you're talking about, accessibility. It's, it's quite a adaptable tool then is it? [David] Yes, so out of the box. The developers of WordPress have put some thought in clearly to SEO and accessibility uhm, so out of the box, it's pretty close. It's one of the best in terms of meeting those requirements for onsite SEO and accessibility guidelines. [Narelle] What is it that attracts you to building website, designing websites? What is there for you that that makes you say yeah, I want to just keep doing this? What do you love about it? [David] I guess uhm, creative. I really, really enjoy IT. I actually originally started out as an accountant but. [Narelle] You're kidding? [David] Yeah, yeah but then got into IT later on because that was that was the area that I, I really enjoyed. So I went into development and coding. So my creativity is more in that direction rather than in artistic design. [Narelle] Yes. [David] So yeah, I just like, I guess I like building things. [Narelle] How did you get into accessibility then? What, what made you look at accessibility? [David] Well, it's part of SEO. I picked up on that early on doing reports for clients on SEO and noticed that Google was starting to include that now as part of their algorithm. So it was interesting that they put that importance on it. Also, there's a history of blindness, blindness in my family as well so. So I'm aware of the issues there. My grandpa, he was completely blind. He actually went blind from glaucoma before it was a

treatable illness and my dad, he also came down with glaucoma. Uh, but uh, they were able to treat it and recover some of the sight, at least in one of his eyes so he was partially blind. [Narelle] Yes. Yeah, it's amazing what you find out about people even though you've known them for a little bit and yeah, that's something I didn't realize with you. So you'd actually, obviously, be very aware of the issues that vision impairment can bring to people accessing websites and digital content. [David] Yeah, that's right. Yeah so my grandpa was involved with Vision Australia. I remember, as a kid, he used to get the the audio cassettes. Books on audio cassette and things like that, so yeah. [Narelle] Yeah, uhm, with accessibility, other than the SEO, what is the importance of it? Yeah, obviously, I'm aware of it. And you're aware of it but can you tell the audience, from your point of view, as the web developer as a the digital marketer. Why? Why incorporate accessibility? [David] Well, there's a number of reasons. I guess, from everyone's perspective incorporating the accessibility guidelines just makes the website a lot easier to read. It looks a lot nicer because we're using nice clean fonts and clean layouts, things like that. And the obvious is for people who are actually disabled it makes the website much more inclusive because they can access the website and all the features. From a business perspective, it's surprising to learn that, I think, almost 20% of people have some sort of disability. So if you don't have an accessible website, potentially, you could be missing out on 20% of the available market. So uhm, there's certainly a number of reasons for incorporating accessibility. [Narelle] When you talk to clients and you talk about accessibility and I'll say that's an extra cost. What's your reaction to that? [David] My reaction to that is to explain the the reasons why they might want to consider that. And also explain that it doesn't necessarily involve having to get certification on every single page on a website. We, we can focus on the key pages of a website and exempt other pages if that's required. Because if you've got a website that's not compliant and there's hundreds of pages then the cost can be prohibitive for some people. So then we can look at narrowing it down to what's the most important on the website. [Narelle] What are the steps? When you look at a website, how do you know that there is accessibility built in? Is there any way that a standard person can tell? [David] Well, if you don't have a disability, it can be a little difficult if you don't know what you're looking for. Some things are obvious, like when functional, functionality like menus and things like that are difficult to use or having trouble reading the the fonts because of the background colour behind them. That's, that's a giveaway. [Narelle] What that it is accessible or that it isn't? [David] That it isn't. If you can't read it as a sighted person because of the colour scheme then you know there's a problem. There's also, uh, quite a few online tools where you can check the. the technical side of the website as well, to see if it's visible to screen readers and things like that. [Narelle] What, what do you advise people, like generally, when you're out and about and someone says uh, went and looked at this website. I couldn't find any, find what I wanted because of you know the issues you've just discussed. What do you advise them to do? Do you talk to them about it? Wha, what, what's the best thing for those people to do? [David] Well, I guess I want to discuss that with them and see if we can assist them in fixing those issues. Yeah, generally, most of these issues can be resolved. It's just a matter of investigation and putting in time to, to look at it. [Narelle] What is the process that you use to design a website that includes accessibility? Do you, obviously you use a process. You wouldn't still be here and wouldn't be successful if you weren't. But what is the process David? What, what would you say to a client that comes and says I want to add accessibility. Where do you

start? [David] Once we've established which pages we're going to be focusing on, and we'd start at the the higher level and use the online tools to work out where the obvious problems are. And we start working on those first and we'd also be leaning on our knowledge and experience of accessibility and then once we've got it to a point that we're happy with it, that's when we run it past yourself, Narelle, to get an audit, to find out if there's anything remaining that needs to be resolved.

[Narelle] What tips and tricks could you, just say off the top of your head, that are some simple tips that would just start them on the journey, David. You know, what, what would a person that looks at their website and thinks yeah, I can you know, they doing it themselves. what can you advise them to do to start on that journey? [David] Well, if they're doing it themselves, I would definitely be suggesting WordPress. because that will solve quite a lot of the issues out of the box like I mentioned before. choosing an appropriate theme such as the Astra theme. that's one, we're currently using, that's very accessible out of the box and also making sure that they use appropriate plugins that aren't going to affect the accessibility in any way, in a negative way. [Narelle] Yeah. [David] When building pages, they need to consider things like the contrast of colours. So that they would need to check that online to make sure the contrast are correct based on the the guidelines. Think about fonts and navigation in terms of making sure that navigation is clear as to where it leads you to. And also thinking about images and making sure there's alt text available for all of the images and that it's a clear description of what what the image is actually about. [Narelle] What about the professional web developer, the web designer? What, what would you say to them? [David] In what way? [Narelle] In relation to you know, should they do it? Should they, if there are any industry where you'd say no don't do it. You know, what, what would you what advice could you give them about the accessibility and the web development techniques. [David] After the web developers out there? [Narelle] Yeah, yeah. [David] Yeah. Well, it's definitely something worth considering. It can not only give your client a boost in Google rankings due to its importance in SEO now. But it also opens the door to expanding their markets and also improves the the general look and feel of the website for everyone. Because the guidelines, they really do improve the look and feel. Not just for disabled people and for screen readers and things like that. You end up with a much cleaner design, much easier to read. [Narelle] Is there are any other benefits? Is it easier to maintain? Is it more difficult to maintain? [David] I guess it depends on how you approach it. So, for example if a client wants to create a new page on the website from scratch and they create a blank page and go to work on it. They could introduce inaccessible content that they're writing. But we have ways to mitigate that. So we can set it up in a way that allows them to start with accessible page. And then modify it to suit basically. So that, that can help reduce that risk. [Narelle] Excellent. Is there are any industry that you would say, no you don't need accessibility techniques. [David] Off top of my head not that I can think of, no. [Narelle] Really? Wow! Always, always. [David] I would to think aoub that. [Narelle] Yeah. I always sort of expect when I ask that question, people just suddenly go off in this long long list but, yeah, that's good to know. David, is there anything else you'd like to say because you know, obviously for me I'm appreciative that you've come on. As I've said at the start, we've done some work with David and we recommend David and his work to anyone that wants a great digital marketing solution. What, is there anything you want to add David? How can people contact you? [David] The best thing to do would be to go to our website atomicwebstrategy.com.au. And we've got quite a bit of information there about accessibility and we're

contactable there from our contact page by form or phone. So yeah. And of course for anyone's auditing needs, I would recommend DASAT and Narelle. [Narelle] Well, thank you. [David] Because you're very easy to work with and I think we make a great team. [Narelle] We do make a great team. But I think more importantly ensuring communication for everyone is just the best possible outcome, isn't it? [David] Absolutely, yep. Sure. [Narelle] Yeah. Thank you David. Thanks so much for your time today. [David] Okay, thanks Narelle. Thanks for having me. [Narelle] Not a problem. And that's another episode of The Digital Access Show. See you next time. [Music]