



CIO 24/7 PODCAST: ENABLING TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY AT ACCENTURE

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

STEPHEN CUTCHINS: We are on the path to make accessibility exactly like security where everybody gets it.

00:09

JASON WARNKE: I'm Jason Warnke, part of the Accenture Internal IT organization. I'm glad to be here today with Stephen Cutchins and Paul Clayton. Stephen is the CIO Accessibility Lead at Accenture and Paul is part of the CIO Global Team for People with Disabilities. We're here today to talk about the Accessibility Program at Accenture and how this impacts every single employee. Thanks for joining me today, guys.

PAUL CLAYTON: Hi there.

STEPHEN CUTCHINS: Hi, you're welcome, my pleasure.

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JASON WARNKE: Great. Can you both tell us a little bit more about yourselves, your backgrounds and how you got involved with our Accessibility Practice?

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STEVE CUTCHINS: Sure, I'll – if that's okay with you, Paul, I'll go first. Hi, I'm Steve Cutchins. So from a very early age, I guess being around people with disabilities. My mother due to cancer was actually a – she had lost her leg to cancer, so she had a disability. I grew up with two

cousins also who were in wheelchairs. One of whom was unable to speak. So, you know, this is the 70s, so at the time there was really no assisted technology to help people out and I was kind of exposed to the frustrations and the difficulties just communicating both with my family and then trying to communicate just simple things like ordering dinner.

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So later on, when I went to college, actually my degree is in industrial and systems engineering and I took classes in human practice engineering. And at the time, it was really more for modifying workplaces to allow them to accommodate the human body. For example, somebody's at a Volvo Truck Plant, they can't go pick an engine up that weighs 2,000 pounds. They have to bring the engine to them and that's what industrial engineering is in a nutshell. But really, it's the same thing we do now, except we modify the web to work with forms of assisted technology to allow humans to work. And so really, I mean it's oddly enough for 40 years now, I've been heading down this path of working with accessibility and persons with disabilities. I just didn't realize it along the way.

02:08

JASON WARNKE: Oh, very interesting.

PAUL CLAYTON: Hi, my name is Paul Clayton. I'm based out of the UK and I've been involved with accessibility within this team for the past 12



months now. But I've actually been with Accenture for 18 years and my background and I'm registered as totally blind. I have no useful vision, so I've always had to rely on limitations or assisted technology to do my day-to-day role. When I first joined Accenture, it was very much in the background with customer services. I have a business degree and for the first nine days working with Accenture, I was working in a support team, I think around 80% at the height of it, supporting around 700 people. And in 2009, that changed as we off sourced all that information to India, so I had the opportunity to as a trainee with the team out here in India, albeit remotely helping them to do basically do my old position. And then I've had various support roles within Accenture. I was working as an executive assistant since then.

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I guess my first real step into the field of accessibility was back in 2013, when I started helping to extend to the UK relationship between Accenture and the employees forum with disability organizing workshops. And we also have a very active enablement committee in the UK. And through various conversations, I was involved. I was actually asked to help facilitate a workshop on assisted technology and bring it to the forefront. And so, I did that for a couple of years and was then approached by the – by Lisa Bertolini in Chicago, who asked me would I be interested in taking on the work of, and working as an Accessibility Officer for 12 months. And that's what I've been doing really for the past 12 months.

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So my day-to-day role very much involves looking at (inaudible) websites and writing feasibility reports and trying to write it saying this is as some of the challenges that a totally blind person may have when they're actually searching the web and because it's one thing to be able to have the screen talk to you, but you also have to be able to manipulate the information that's on screen and JAWS allows me to do that. I'm not able to use the mouse, but there are various keystrokes built in that I can actually use to move to difficult components, so I can, for example, draw a list of links on the website. I can find where the right buttons are, etc., etc. But this will only happen if the sites are actually coded properly, so I will often produce

reports to say certain links are accessible or not as the case may be and give the underlying reasons to why that might be the case.

05:08

JASON WARNKE: Excellent. You both have excellent context and background and it's really, really important for us here at Accenture and within CIO to make sure that we're building accessible services. So as a company, we set an ambitious goal to have all of Accenture people's interactions with software, devices and services, to be compliant with globally defined accessibility standards. How are we accomplishing this?

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STEPHEN CUTCHINS: So we have a somewhat ambitious goal given our size of we want to make a certain percentage of our interactions over the next certain number of years accessible. So, for example, the first year, 40%; the next year, 60%. And we have a team within CIO, now it's over 20 people to include a fairly high percentage of people with disabilities. Probably half I think, Paul, maybe, where we do the testing and the training of teams. You can imagine, I don't remember the exact number, but you'll know better than me, but I think 2,000 total sites. It's unbelievable how many sites we have. But we're starting with the highest ones, for example. Everybody every, you know, week or couple of weeks has to enter time sheets. So we want to make sure that's accessible to the various forms of assisted technology.

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Paul earlier mentioned JAWS. That's a program, a screen reader that allows him, so a blind user to interact with a site. Everything, you know, I'm lucky I can see and use a mouse. When I click on a button, I can see that it says submit. Paul can't see it. So the screen reader says submit button and that's how he interacts with it. So we've taken a few years goal of every year increasing the percentage of visits to accessible sites. Our team does the testing, gives the reports, both in just kind of hard numbers that we run from automated tools and having people like Paul saying, this is good, this is bad or this is somewhere in between based on his particular type of assisted technology he has to use. And then the teams go back and actually code their sites and then we do retesting and give training



along the way and keep them updated on the various guidance that we follow. So it's very iterative, very collaborative with all of our teams.

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JASON WARNKE: That's excellent. What other ways are we going about delivering on this very ambitious and important goal?

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STEPHEN CUTCHINS: So we realize that not a lot of people knew what accessibility was, especially new hires out of college. So we purchased many hundreds of licenses from a third party company for training, for online training and it was pretty substantial. I think the total was, correct me if I'm wrong, Paul. Maybe 20 hours total of training of online and to include tests along the way and certifications. And we have offered this to everyone from the managers and well above. We had managing directors taking this training, down to again, like I mentioned, the college new hires who had no idea. You know, they just graduated with their computer science degree and they're a developer, they didn't understand accessibility. And the training covered – and we gave it different (inaudible).

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So if it was a managing director who doesn't obviously code anymore, we gave them kind of a general awareness of what accessibility is. And the developers had actual and fairly hardcore, you know, this is how you properly code a button, so it works with all screen reader and JAWS that we talked about or how to code a link, so they hear it or things like what we tend not to think about. But if you have errors in red and success in green, if you're color blind, you can't see that. I know a lot of times we've talked about users who were blind, but what about limited vision? They need screen magnification. And all this training and the testing we do, by the way, covers all that. And even though I've been doing this for a decade and a half, I had to take the training and I had to pass and so did Paul and everybody in our team did.

09:16

JASON WARNKE: Excellent. What actions are we taking to change people's behaviors across the company and with our vendors?

09:24

STEPHEN CUTCHINS: The vendors, I love the work, very proud of the work we're doing with vendors. So across the company, we really want this – it's a very holistic approach. We want it – we always liken it to security. If everyone at Accenture gets security, they understand that sites have to be, you know, you need passwords, you need CAPTCHA, you can't go letting everybody's data get hacked. We are on the path to make accessibility exactly like security where everybody gets it, everybody understands it. I had mentioned colors and greens and red a little while ago. And by the way, the director that I report to, he is color blind. So if I send him a pie chart and some of the pie chart's red and some of it's green, unless I have text labels, he can't tell the difference.

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And I get that, I want to make sure and we want to make sure as a team that everyone at Accenture gets that. That they send that pie chart, they're not just going to use greens and reds and, you know, colors. They're going to also kind of stop and think about wait a minute, what if somebody is color blind and, you know, the colors to them look gray. What if somebody's fully blind? What if somebody has – what if somebody's deaf and I'm creating a video, how's that going to impact them?

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But the work we've done with the vendors, we've actually identified our top vendors. It's just as we've done with our websites. We started it at the highest – the apps with the highest usage and contacted vendors and we gave them an internal rating system. We sent them out surveys. In some cases, we tested. In some cases, we actually tested and provided feedback to the vendors to say this is where, this is like where Paul came in to say, excuse me, Paul uses a certain screen reader, certain version of browser, has to use – obviously, can't use a mouse, has to use the keyboard. These are the specific problems he had when using your software and we work with vendors very back and forth, a very – not just as a consumer of their products, but really as a partner, helping them make their software accessible.

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Some of these kind of companies are small. I



mean I'm talking 20 developers on a company. They don't have the resources and they don't have the knowhow to make their products accessible, so we work with them to help that. And it helps us, it helps our users and also, it helps the company. So the next time we have buy their software, they already get it. They understand accessibility. We won't have to go through the same, I don't want to say pain points, but the same efforts to try to make sure we're buying accessible software.

11:59

JASON WARNKE: Interesting. Paul, anything you'd like to add there about ways that we're helping to change people's behaviors either, you know, on our development teams, on our teams at large, our people at large that aren't necessarily directly involved with the creation of new capabilities or launching them inside of Accenture, if they're on a vendor platform or as we're referring to their with our vendors? Anything else you'd like to add?

12:24

PAUL CLAYTON: If I can add anything to what Stephen is saying, but one of the illustrations, things to remember to remember with a screen reader is it is what it he says. It's a third party piece of software which actually needs to text to actually work. So one of the areas is I think Steve related to is to capture earlier on is an example and these can be particularly challenging for blind people because many organizations may have – may not thought to actually incorporate it, an audio alternative. But then you have to then go through and work out how do you access the audio alternative? Is the audio alternative clear?

13:05

One of the things I try to say as well is to communicate through your speech. Speech uses – JAWS which does job access with speech and can also work with third party software such as Browser Display, for example. So whenever it's communicating speech is

displayed electronically on a line of text in front of me and in braille which if you're hard of hearing, for example, then braille may very well be your primary outsource for access to information. So that's why it's important to incorporate all of these factors. And I think that can be a challenge sometimes because not all guidelines will suit everybody. So it's how you communicate that to get to get a happy medium.

14:01

A blind person will particularly with websites coming out nowadays with – they're so much more dynamic than they used to be, for me as a totally blind person, less information on the screen is more because you can – if the website's very crowded, then it becomes difficult. It can become a challenge. If you're following accessibility guidelines, you're going towards a way to making your site accessible. However, there are differences between accessibility and usability. And that's why one of the valuable aspects of this program is that we're incorporating wave testing and manual testing with real life DTEs, who actually have to use this software. And just increasingly, research actually shows that if a site is accessible for a blind person to use, then you invariably have a win win situation because you're creating a much more customer service experience for everyone, for all users across the board. And if you embed accessibility in from the outset, it's actually a much – it's actually far cheaper to do it that way, rather than trying to retrofit further down the line.

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JASON WARNKE: Right. And then the steam coming through very strong is one size does not fit all. Just when you think you've got it covered for one segment of the population, you have to make sure that you are not inhibiting another segment. So that's hugely important and I know that the team as a whole has a much greater focus on, you know, all of these aspects. So what a great story and an excellent program. Thanks so much for sharing your stories, both your personal stories, as well as how they're relating to your very important work here at



Accenture. I can't wait to see where we go from here with our accessibility programs.

15:57

Well, that's it for this edition of Accenture 24/7 Podcast. Thanks for joining us today. Until next time, I'm Jason Warnke. Thanks, guys.

STEPHEN CUTCHINS: Thank you, bye, Jason.

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