Social Media Accessibility

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Social media has become an integral part of communication in today's world, especially for people with disabilities. It is vital for this population for a variety of reasons, including socialization, entertainment, education, and sharing information about products and services.

There is also an employment aspect for its use as well. Creating resumes, forming professional connections and learning about job opportunities can all be done via social media. Groups on LinkedIn and messaging through Twitter are concrete examples of how someone with a disability can use social media in his/her professional life.

Moreover, the percentage of recruiters who are using LinkedIn is 95%. For that reason, it's beneficial for a job seeker to have a profile on it. 55% of Human Resource managers report that they have reconsidered a candidate based on his/her presence on social media. Statistics from Wild, Gian (October 20, 2015). Social Media and Accessibility [Webinar]. In *ADA Audio Conference Series*.

Unfortunately, not all forms of social media are accessible to people with disabilities and their adaptive equipment. The main reasons are: the websites or software are not programmed correctly, the websites are constantly changing without warning and a lack of knowledge on how to make social media accessible. Since this is the case, it's extremely important to continually test social media sites for accessibility.

Compared to other social media sites, FaceBook changes frequently. It is considered one of the more inaccessible social media forums. However, there have been improvements with FaceBook over the years. For example, it no longer has CAPTCHA on its sign-up page. Still, some issues with FaceBook accessibility remain: It isn't fully keyboard accessible, zooming breaks the site, the order of columns is incorrect and no ability to add alt text to images, are just some of the problems. Some alternatives for accessing Facebook are [Facely HD](#) and [m.facebook.com](#).

YouTube having its videos on auto-play is a huge accessibility problem (turn that feature off when you upload a video to YouTube). Auto-play means that a video plays as soon as its page is loaded. YouTube isn't fully keyboard accessible either. Additionally, the auto-captioning feature on YouTube is not always accurate, although it does have ways to sync the text to the video. YouTube has an alternative accessible interface called [Accessible YouTube](#).

Twitter is mostly accessible, including keyboard accessibility. Some alternatives for accessing Twitter are [EasyChirp](#) and [Twitterrific](#) (mobile app).

When it comes to making social media accessible, there are many types of disabilities to take into consideration – from physical to cognitive to hearing impairments. Often, people think it's just

visual disabilities that have to be accommodated, but it's actually all kinds.

The first step to making a company's social media site accessible is to put the company's contact information (phone number and e-mail address) on the account page, so a user can contact the company if there's a problem. There should be a link to the company's website on its social media page as well.

It is also recommended that if a company posts anything, including videos, it should be repeated on its website. A business can e-mail social media updates at regular intervals to people who can't use social media. It should also post the same information to multiple social media outlets and give links that are relevant to what is being posted. A company should provide the contact information for its social media support team too.

Using clear and simple language also makes social media more accessible. When running words together for a hashtag, capitalize the first letter of each word (camel case). For example, hashtaging the phrase "Sierra Group", it should be #SierraGroup. Limit hashtags and put them at the end of tweets. Avoid abbreviations and misspelled words when possible.

When linking to videos on YouTube, warn users about auto-play and the lack of accurate transcripts, captions and audio descriptions. Describing pictures and videos or providing links to descriptions are ways of making social media more accessible.

A large corporation may consider contacting the social media companies directly about addressing accessibility issues it is experiencing with its own site. These tips for making social media more accessible can be found on digital.gov.

If a business posts information on social media sites, it should be aware that these sites are not entirely accessible and should have

policies and procedures that make them more so. Also, if the employee who is doing the posting has a disability, he/she may need an accommodation to do that task.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that if an individual with a disability is having trouble accessing social media, he/she should contact an organization where he/she receives services to see if they can help eliminate the obstacles to social media.

Lastly, keep checking the Internet for new accessible alternative apps and software for accessing social media. As more programmers become aware of the need for accessible social media, more alternatives will become available.