

A MANIFESTO: 8 REASONS WHY ACCESSIBILITY RESEARCH MATTERS MORE THAN EVER:

The global shift due to the pandemic has led to a host of circumstances and rapid changes that disproportionally affect people with accessibility needs now and needs in the future.

Here are 8 reasons why we think accessibility matters now more than ever (and will continue to matter):

1 HELP EVERYBODY AND YOURSELF

At one point in our lives we will all have a (lasting) disability. We should therefore attempt to actively "meet the needs of the present while working to meet the needs of the future" through continuous examination of our products and services.

2 INCLUDE THE HIDDEN

While the pandemic may have brought a lot of us closer together, we can also unanimously agree that many people have also become more lonely and isolated. As loneliness and isolation is already felt more by people with accessibility needs, improved accessibility can reduce these phenomena and increase the overall well-being amongst this group of people.

3 OUR NEEDS FOREVER INCREASE

As life expectancy increases, so do our disability-adjusted years. This is an important point since the majority of us have switched to more sedentary lifestyles overnight. This means we can expect a larger burden on our healthcare, for a longer period, per person. This in turn affects users' future spending power as well as ability to use certain products and services. The need to design our products and services with this in mind, is therefore increasing.

4 KEEP YOUR TECH FRESH

Technology changes over time and therefore so do accessibility needs. With the rapid digitalisation of services at the start of the pandemic, it would serve us to reflect on how this has impacted people with accessibility needs.

5 SHARE AND ENGAGE

There is an increased visibility of voices within the community of people with accessibility needs, however not an increase in accessibility. This is the optimal time to leverage this visibility in accessibility research.

6 AVOID THE #A11Y ECHO CHAMBER

Communication happens more and more over social media, however, many people with accessibility needs are still marginalised from this part of society and risk being excluded more and more from conversation if we do not keep the pace.

7 SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS IS ROOTED IN INCLUSIVITY

Companies are missing out on billions of pounds in revenue, by not adhering to accessibility guidelines and missing out on a large group of users. Adhering to accessibility guidelines would ensure companies reduce their risk of litigation and increase their potential customer base, while simultaneously delivering an accessible experience for all.

8 IMPROVE FOR TOMORROW, FORGET ABOUT YESTERDAY

This year has made it evident that we have fallen short in including everyone in the debate of accessibility. Now is the time to explore how we can all be better advocates for accessibility.