

WeCo

GAAD: Live Demos

Thursday, May 16, 2019

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We're going to go say hi to Lynn. Does anyone have questions to ask Lynn about accessibility or their website or navigating websites?

Lynn: Hi. I'm going to sit down.

Hello.

Questions are coming through on the chat if they have anything.

Lynn: I'm actually representing users who live with cognitive disabilities, partially because -- well, totally because I grew up in a family with generations of cognitive disabilities including epilepsy and mental illness. I got very used to what it was like to navigate life with a cognitive disability. Some of the work that I've done in my career has focused on how people take in information differently on websites, you know, content management really matters when people live with cognitive disabilities, having things that are intuitive and easy to comprehend, having websites that aren't totally cluttered.

When I worked in government, we used to deal with people that wanted to use websites as filing cabinets for every back copy or newsletter ever created. Things like that can really create hampered accessibility for someone who lives with a cognitive disability.

All the basic things that you're taught about content management and being clear, simple language, limited use of acronyms, white space on a page, are helpful to people living with cognitive disabilities.

It was interesting conversation . . .

I have a question from Brie.

Question: Any recommendations on creating alt-text? I find it is difficult to teach content strategists to think outside of traditional standards and for digital / accessibility.

Actually, this is a good question to ask me because part of the work I did for the state of Minnesota was to teach a group of people how to write alternative text tags about things that they knew nothing about like certain graphics and maps and schematics that had to do with roads that were going through people's neighborhoods that needed to be out for public comment.

You're never going to hit the mark with everybody with alternative text tags. One of the first workshops we taught as a company at WeCo, we had two people who were blind having kind of a big fight about one likes really descriptive tags and the other wanted it short and concise.

People who are blind are just as different as anyone else. We'll have different preferences.

At WeCo, we try to hit a sweet spot with alternative text tags and to more focus on what the visual user is getting that the non-visual user needs to know about. Sometimes, that will warrant a longer alternative text tag.

For example, at MDOT, we might have a complicated graph showing something. That would warrant a long description alternative text tag.

I think it's asking yourself the question, "if I keep this short, is there something that the non-visual user will miss?" Focus on keeping that information the same for the visual user and non-visual user. That's what we use as a guide.

Is that helpful at all, Brie?

There might be a slight delay.

OK.

Any other questions about anything? It doesn't have to be cognitive.

My background, I've worked in a few different areas of accessibility. I know just enough about code to be dangerous.

[Laughter]

But probably focused more on content management in my career.

Great.

Of course, we have the incomparable Jen Hurst on the line, who is our accessibility specialist and works with me on document accessibility from California. She is great at answering questions, as well.

I think that I will just turn this back over to Andy unless there's another question.

Of course, if you think of something, our email address -- I'll type it in. If you give us a huge amount of questions, we can't answer that, but we can take a few questions from you if you need to send them to our accessibility department at accessinfo@theweco.

Happy to help.

Thank you for attending online tonight. It's the first time we were able to do the live stream. It was really fun to have you with us.

We're excited about being able to live stream our events and include more people who may not be able to get to beautiful Minneapolis or don't have time or may not be able to come because they live with a disability. We're happy to include you. I'll turn it back to Andy.

Andy? It's your show.

[Laughter]

Andy: Is anyone wanting to see a demonstration that we might not have seen completely, or are all content with the demonstrations we've seen this evening?

No problem. Thank you.

Thank you, Brie, for tuning in. I'm glad we had this opportunity available for you.

Excellent. On that note, we're going to end the stream. This will be available online. I'll post the link to the Eventbrite page and the Meet Up page.

If you want to find us after the event, it's available there. Otherwise, if you have questions, reach me via our Meet Up page or my email address that I'll put here in a moment.

Thank you. Have a great evening.

[End of meeting]