

Fix the Web!

Grass roots campaign: social media approaches to e-accessibility

The problem

W3C: “Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web, and that they can contribute to the Web.” Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities.

Web accessibility is a key and unsolved issue for digital inclusion. The EC has a “Riga” target that by 2010 100% of public sector websites should be e-accessible. Recent measures show it to be at 5%. Top down efforts to solve this problem have failed.

The Solution

Through initial scoping work for the EC we have developed and uncovered some approaches to this problem which work directly with disabled people and techie volunteers in collaborative, web2.0 enabled approaches to **fix e-accessibility of websites**. These approaches require volunteers, project management and coordination to gather momentum.

Web owners need to be approached by informed (volunteer) techies on e-accessibility issues. We can do this en masse, making the complaints process for disabled people take less than one minute. Web Visum (<http://webvisum.com/>) and IBMs accessibility tool are further examples of solutions. Imagine looking at a website through one of these tools and noticing the e-accessibility problems. You then either fix them yourself or ask a volunteer to do it. The next person who looks at that website through the tool sees the fixed version. Brilliant!

We want to create a “Wikipedia” for e-accessibility making use of open source and web2.0 tools, through which a community of disabled users could log web accessibility issues with a community of “techie” volunteers who would “Fix the Web” and inform website owners of their mistakes. Other issues can be tackled too- such as creating pieces of software where they are needed.

HOW

We on intend to achieve this by:

- marshalling and consulting with key stakeholders to get the process right
- developing a process which can be self-serving
- taking a viral marketing approach to build momentum

In the long term, this approach has the potential to create direct change across the entire web, whilst sending messages from the grass roots, to web and software developers, about how they need to approach their work. The numbers could thus grow exponentially as they have in other aspects of the web2.0 world.