



Convince Your Clients of
Accessibility: Arguments
and Business Cases



About me

- Digital Accessibility expert at Accessibility Desk
- First encounter with WordPress in 2009.
- First talk at WordCamp NL 2010.
- Studied ICT.
- In marketing for >15 years.
- Interested in Psychology.
- Tennis player, loves board games and dancing, adores cats.
- Find me on LinkedIn: /anneliesverhelst

Currently working on WP Accessibility Docs with Rian Rietveld, Joe Dolson, and many more.

Will also do a workshop during WordCamp NL in November.



Today's topics

- Dealing with client resistance
- The arguments for accessibility
- This is how we do it
- How to make a business case



Recognize this?

**It doesn't even matter
how hard you try.**



Resistance



Logical/rational
resistance



Psychological/emotional
resistance



Sociological/political
resistance





Logical/rational resistance

Disagreement with facts

The client may not agree with the rationale or data presented to support the effort being put into accessibility.





Logical/rational resistance

Effort and cost

One of the most pressing points of resistance. The belief that the time, effort, or economic costs to make the change are too high, even in light of clear benefits.



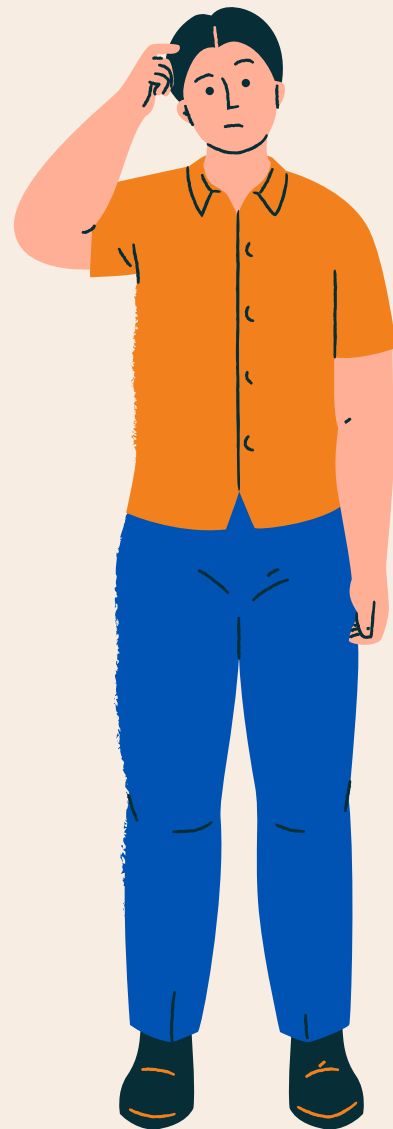
Logical/rational resistance



Feasibility

The client is questioning the technical feasibility or practicality of making everything accessible.





Logical/rational resistance

Lack of clarity

The client has received unclear communication about the purpose, benefits, or how it will work in the future.



Result?

**Things that don't seem to be logical
or rational result in confusion.**



Psychological/emotional resistance



Fear of the unknown

The client may never admit to this, but they, or their employees, may fear the uncertainty that comes with a change in the way of work.





Psychological/emotional resistance

Threat to ego and security

People might feel that the changes threaten their sense of security, identity or self-importance.



Psychological/emotional resistance

Mistrust



It might be an internal issue. A lack of trust in the management or organizational leadership can make employees skeptical. This is where clients may appear enthusiastic at first, but later back out.



Psychological/emotional resistance



Emotional response

You will hear clients say: People have strong reactions to this subject. We need more time to smooth things out internally.



Result?

Not knowing enough leads to strong feelings of uncertainty.





Sociological/political resistance

Impact on status or power

Similar to the threat to ego, but triggered by external factors. Happens when people perceive negative effects on their status, power or control within the organization.





Sociological/political resistance

Protecting routines and teams

The client may resist because of the impact change might have on their teams. Maybe something changed recently, and they're hesitant to do it again.





Sociological/political resistance

Lack of buy-in

Also one of the reasons a client may appear enthusiastic at first, but becomes hesitant later. They might have trouble gaining internal support and buy-in from key stakeholders.



Sociological/political resistance

Cultural challenges

They may be a misalignment with the existing organizational culture. Your client may well be the only advocate for accessibility. Plus, when you're working with international clients, this might be a broader issue.



Result?

This type of blowback shakes your client's firm ground.





Help them change

Become their low key change agent.



Change models



- Lewin's 3-Stage Model of Change
- McKinsey's 7-S model
- Nudge Theory
- ADKAR Change Management Model
- Kühler-Ross Change Curve
- Bridges' Transition Model
- Satir Change Model
- Kotter's Theory
- Maurer 3 Levels of Resistance and Change

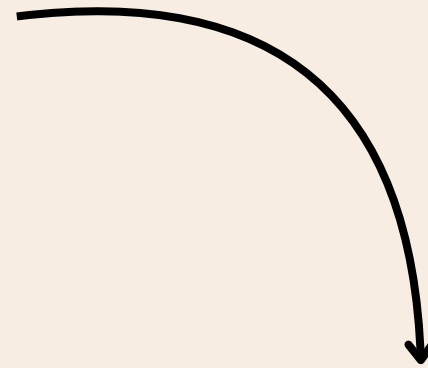


Maurer

I don't get it

I don't understand the purpose of accessibility and how to do it anyway.

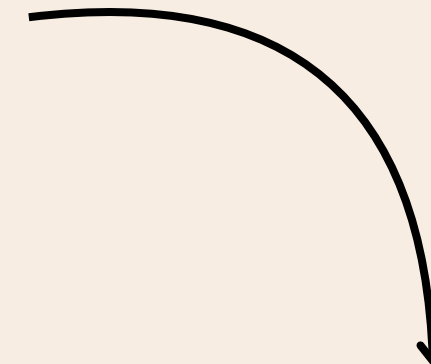
Logical/rational resistance



I don't like it

It's just going to be tons of work, I need to change a lot, and it takes forever.

Psychological/emotional resistance



I don't like you

I don't trust you, you're just as commercial as everyone.

Sociological/political resistance



Turning resistance into support

You have your creativity at your disposal.



Level 1 - make your case

Why

Make sure the client knows why accessibility is needed. Put the why before the how.

Language

Explain in a language your audience understands. They're not accessibility specialists. Some things that are logical to you may be lost on them.

Multiple ways

People take in information in different ways. Hearing, seeing, and conversations. Bring variety in your communication channels.



Level 2 - Remove fear, increase excitement

What's in it for them

People need to believe that making services or products accessible serves them in some way. On a personal level as well as on a business level.

Engage

People tend to support things they helped building. So give them the opportunity to engage.

Honesty

Be honest also about downsides. Stop rumors from spreading. If you don't know, say so.



Level 3 - Rebuild

Take the blame

If the relationship is damaged, take the blame, take responsibility. This is about your relationship with the client, but also your client's relationship in their organization.

Commit

Demonstrate that you are trustworthy. This is about your relationship with your client, but also your client's relationship in their organization.

Consider

Take note of what the resisting people are saying. Admit that you may have been wrong and you're considering their ideas (open up for sharing these).



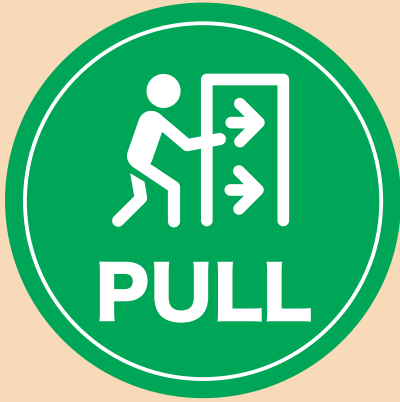
Another approach

Use your influence.



Influence

There's more than one way to influence decisions and opinions.

Energy	Style	Behavior
Push 	Persuading	Proposing Reasoning
	Asserting	Evaluating Stating Pressure
Pull 	Bridging	Involving Listening Disclosing
	Attracting	Finding common ground Sharing visions



So, dealing with client resistance?

- Find out what the real problem is
- Make a plan (if really worth it)
- Help your client convince stakeholders
- Use change management or influence models to help you with this.



The arguments

**Use the right arguments as a
vehicle for your change efforts.**





All the reasons

- Better experience for all users
- Higher revenue
- Saving costs
- Influence on SEO, higher reach
- Better findability in AI/Deep Search
- Robust and sustainable products
- Comply with legislation
- Crush the competition



Reason 1

Better experience for all users

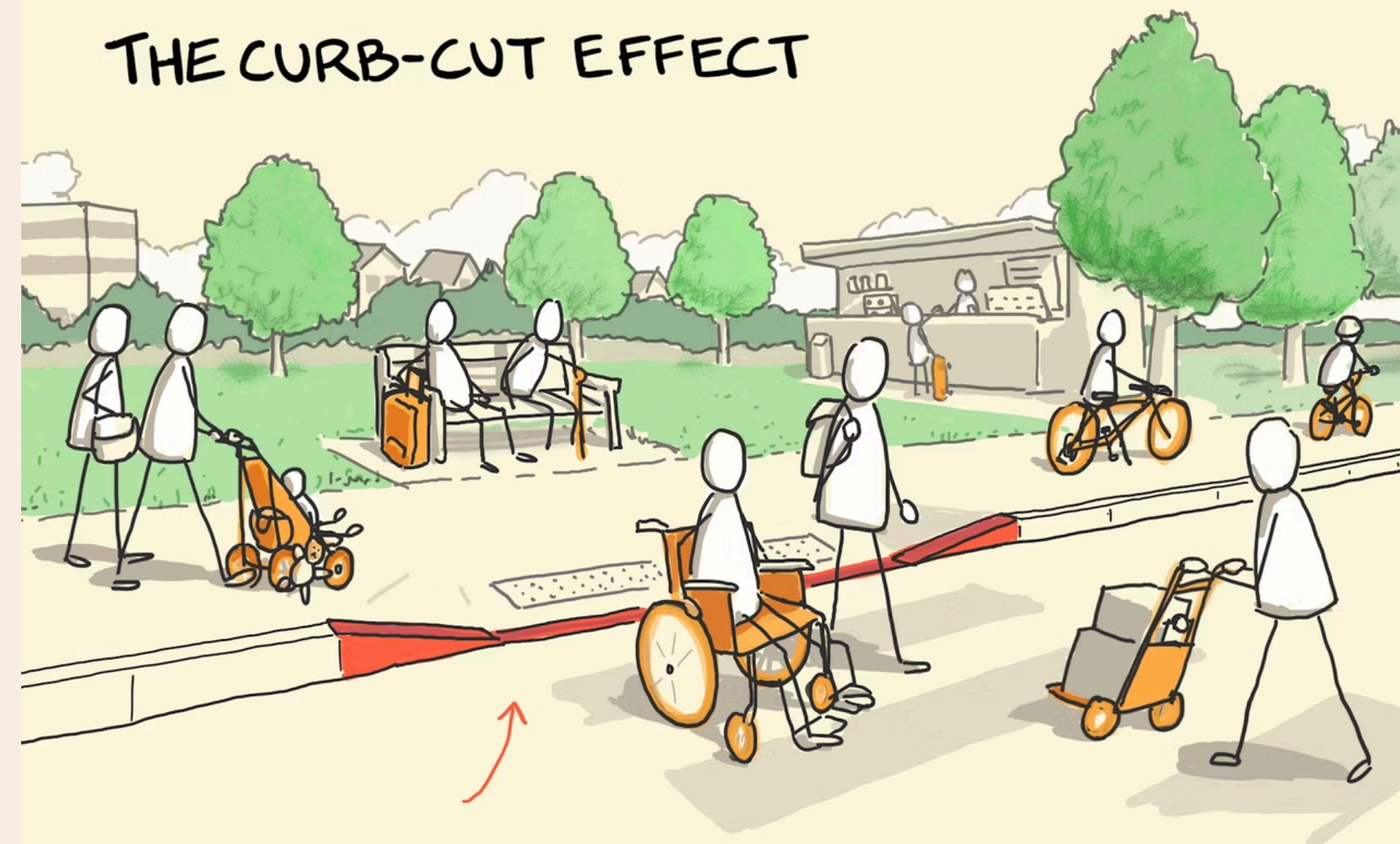


Curb-cut effect

The phenomenon that when you design based on the specific needs of someone with a disability...

...it is appreciated by more than just the target group!

Source: [Sketchplanations](#)



WHEN WE DESIGN
FOR DISABILITIES

... WE MAKE THINGS
BETTER FOR EVERYONE

sketchplanations



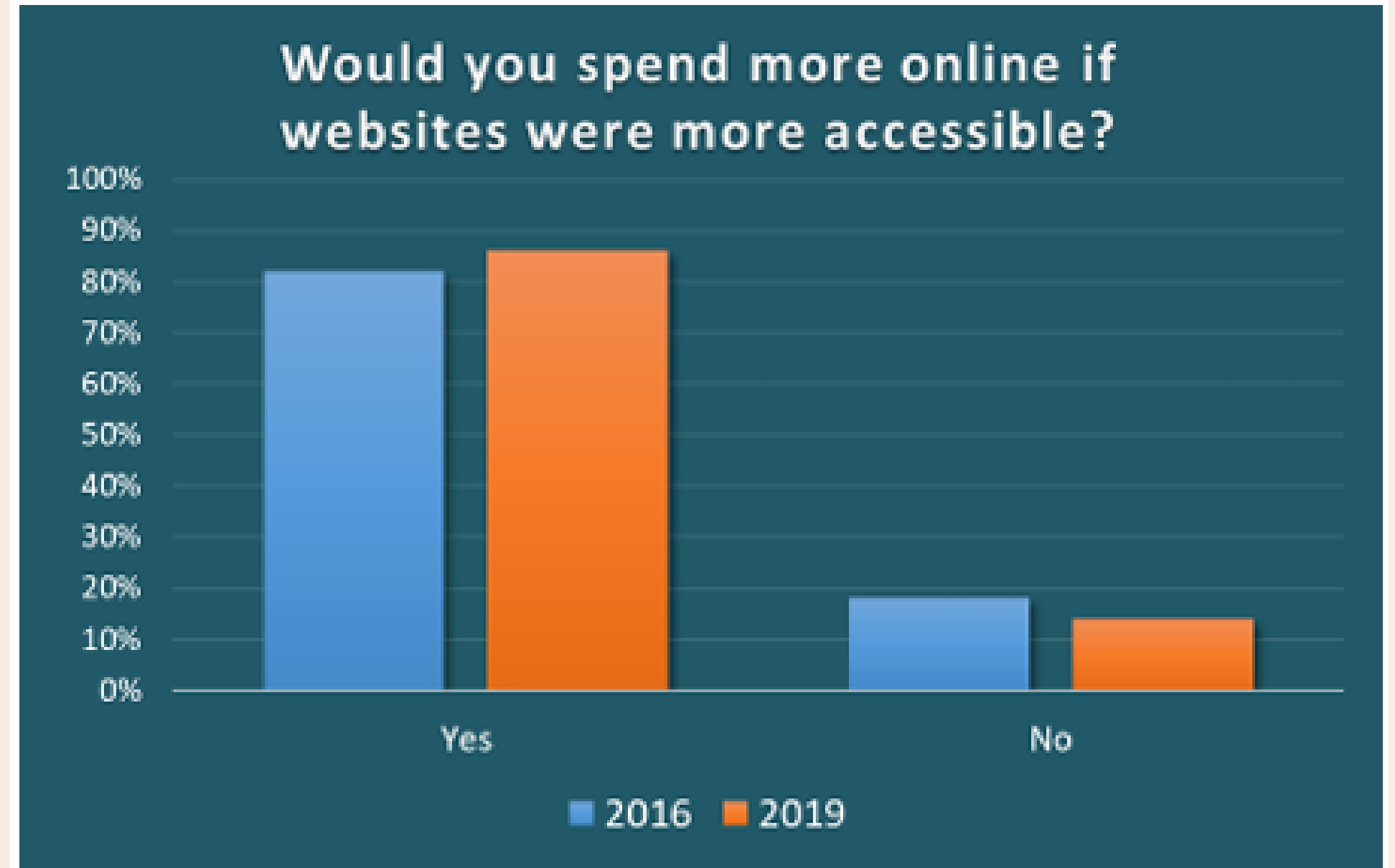
Reason 2

Higher revenue



Higher turnover

**Accessible websites
lead to loyal
customers who
spend more.**



Reason 3

Saving costs



Saving costs

Better findability
results in at least
15% fewer
customer service
inquiries.

Reduced Servicing Costs

Organizations we spoke with cited a wide range of savings across diverse industries and customer bases, so we've used straightforward industry averages to determine an expected cost savings of €250,000 per 1 million annual calls. Figure 11 below shows the details of this calculation, based on annual call volume.

While we have included this cost savings in terms of the cost per call, we heard about other situations with measurable value in the interviews. For one government agency, regarding the submission of forms, the interviewee told us, "It's £10 for paper versus £1 for online." That is a cost savings that adds up quickly, which is as important in the public sector as in the private sector.

FIGURE 11
Reduced Servicing Costs

Ref.	Metric	Calculation	Year 1
B1	Annual call volume		1,000,000
B2	Percentage of customers with disabilities who call because they can't self-serve on the web		5%
B3	Cost per call		€5
Bt	Annual costs avoided	B1*B2*B3	€250,000

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Conclusions

From the two benefits quantified in this category of customer-facing value, it's clear that even with conservative assumptions, the total impact in terms of cost savings and incremental revenue can be substantial. While we have not quantified the value of risk avoidance associated with preventing litigation by customers seeking accessible technology options, these costs can quickly escalate. Forrester encourages the reader to consider the key drivers within his or her organization to project the potential impact in all three of these areas.



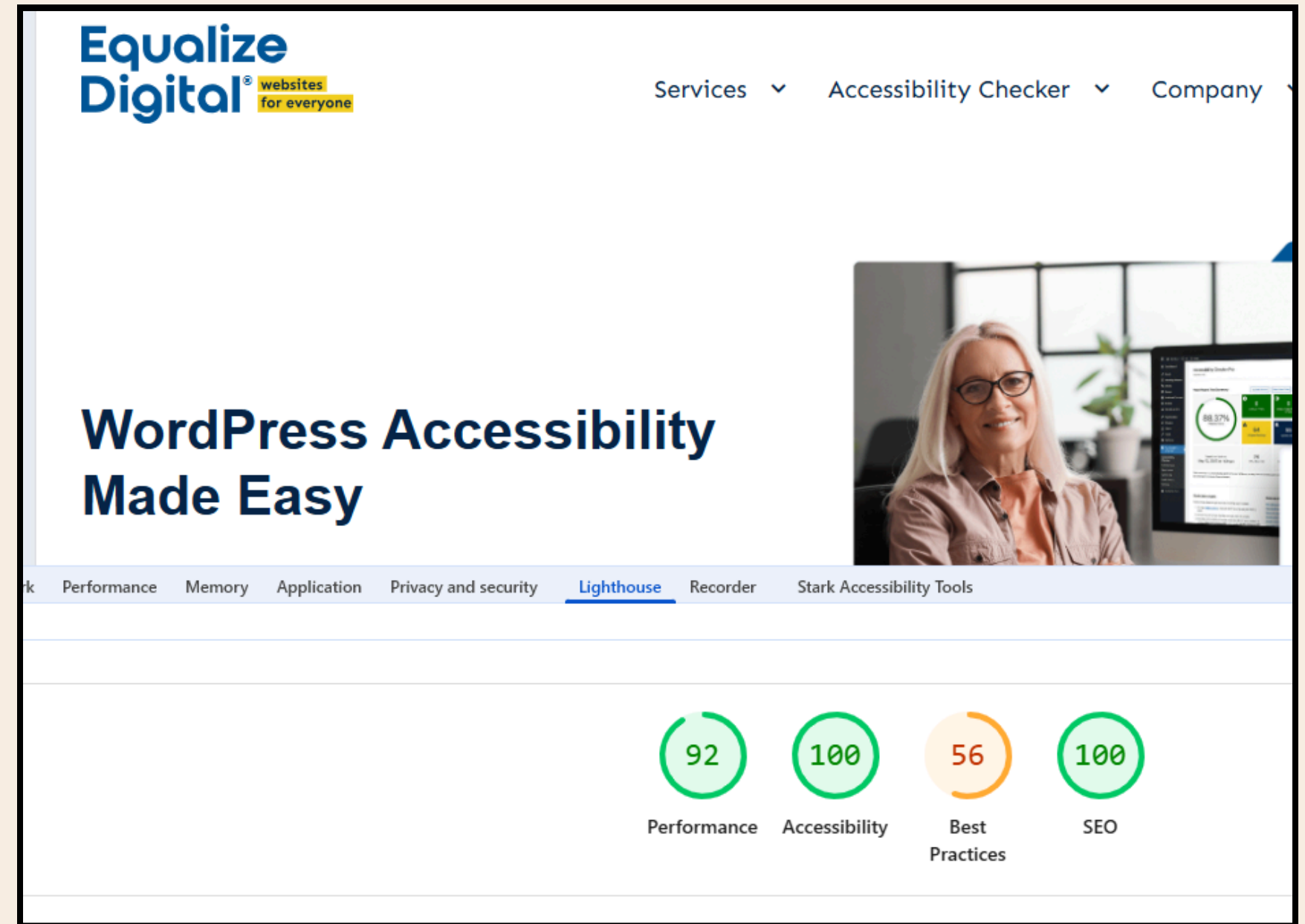
Reason 4

Influence on SEO
Higher reach



Tools

It's for a reason
that Google and
Screaming Frog
have Accessibility
tabs.



Reason 5

Better findability in AI/Deep search



AI/Deep Search

**Reads the raw
HTML/code and
tries to make sense
of it.**

Can you explain in detail how you read websites, how having a fully accessible website helps you (ChatGPT), and how it compares to how a search engine like Google works? Do you also render a website?

How I read a website

- I **don't render websites like a browser** (so I don't see layout, colors, or interactive buttons).
- What I can process is the **raw HTML structure** or the **text content** you provide, or that I fetch with a web tool.
- I pay attention to things like:
 - **Headings** (`<h1>`, `<h2>`, ...) to understand hierarchy.
 - **Text and lists** to capture the main content.
 - **Alt text** to know what's in an image.
 - **ARIA labels and roles** to understand the function of buttons, forms, or sections.
 - **Metadata and structured data** (e.g., schema.org in JSON-LD) to pick up facts more easily.
- JavaScript-generated content is usually invisible to me unless it's already included in the raw HTML or exposed through an API.

How an accessible website helps me

An accessible site is easier for me (and for other AI systems) to process because:

- The **structure is clear** → I can tell what's important versus secondary.
- **Images have context** via alt text → otherwise it's just "image.png".
- **Forms and buttons are labeled logically** → I can understand their purpose.
- **Consistent semantics** make it easier to analyze and summarize correctly.

This is very similar to how screen readers work for humans: we both rely on clear, structured information.



Reason 6

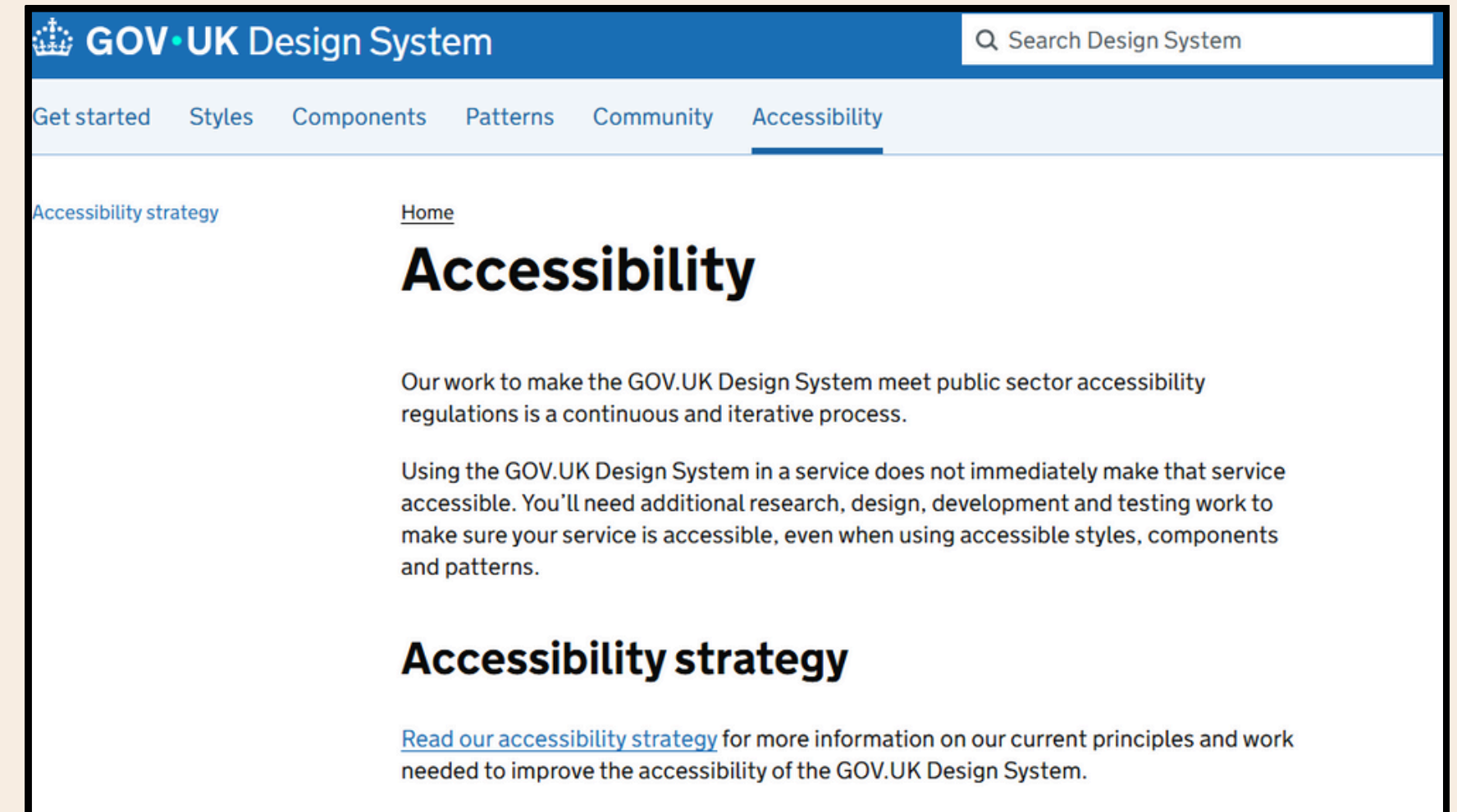
Robust and sustainable products



Design system

Having rules and guidelines for code and design helps in the future.

<https://design-system.service.gov.uk/>



Reason 7

Comply with legislation



noticias

nacional

discapacidad

TRIBUNALES

La Audiencia Nacional confirma una multa a Vueling por no tener una web accesible

22 MAR 2024 | 14:45H | MADRID

SERVIMEDIA

La Sala de lo Contencioso-administrativo de la Audiencia Nacional (Sala IV) ha impuesto una multa de 90.000 euros y la prohibición de concurrir a procedimientos de contratación por seis meses impuestas a Vueling Airlines por la Secretaría de Estado de Justicia debido al incumplimiento en su página web de las condiciones de accesibilidad para personas con discapacidad.

En una sentencia, los magistrados de la Sección Octava desestimarán la demanda de Vueling Airlines contra la Resolución de octubre de 2020 impuesta por la Audiencia Nacional (Sala IV) en virtud del artículo 95.3.e) del Real Decreto Legislativo 1/2013, de 29 de noviembre, por el que se aprueba el texto refundido de la Ley General de Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad y de su

Prevent costly lawsuits

In most EU countries, fines will be given.

Article source



Reason 8

Crush the competition



Just do it

If they don't take
these reasons
seriously, you have
a BIG opportunity.

Image source

Technology & Computing	41.8	-18.0%
Science	44.0	-13.6%
Careers	44.4	-12.8%
Business	44.8	-12.1%
Society	46.2	-9.3%
Education	47.0	-7.8%
Health and Fitness	47.7	-6.4%
Religion and Spirituality	49.0	-3.8%
Food and Drink	50.4	-1.1%
Family and Parenting	52.3	+2.6%
Gaming	52.8	+3.6%
Real Estate	53.7	+5.4%
Adult Content	53.1	+4.1%
Arts and Entertainment	54.1	+6.1%
Gambling/Casinos	54.5	+6.9%
Pets	55.5	+9.0%
Automotive	57.8	+13.5%
Travel	59.7	+17.2%
Hobbies and Interests	59.7	+17.2%
News/Weather/Information	59.8	+17.4%
Home and Garden	61.9	+21.5%
Style & Fashion	64.7	+26.9%
Sports	66.3	+30.1%
Shopping	71.2	+39.8%





This is how we do it

We take a client by the hand and do whatever they need to get convinced.



Resulting efforts



Review videos



Webinars



Blog posts



Knowledge base



Personal calls



Whitepapers



Events



**“But, I still want to know what we
gain from putting all this effort in.
Do you have numbers, cases,
proof?”**





Research

Well, it's super scarce.



Click-Away Pound Survey (2019)



- 7.15 million disabled internet users in the UK have access needs
- The online spending power of people with access needs in the UK is now £24.8 billion
- Percentage of disabled people with access needs who say they ‘click away’ from a site with barriers = 69%
- Percentage of users with access needs who limit their shopping to sites they know are barrier-free = 83%

<https://www.clickawaypound.com/>





Why Accessibility Matters More Than Ever for SEO Performance

- Accessible sites see 23% more visitors
- More accessible sites rank for 27% more Terms

<https://urlr.me/NHbzs5>





**Wouldn't it be great to
set up your own business
case?**





Setup

Go to your clients Analytics tool (ask for access/data) and set a baseline for:

- Organic Search traffic on homepage, average in the past few months
- Conversion rates like:
 - Number of forms sent versus bounce/drop
 - Number of accounts successfully registered versus bounce/drop
 - Successful shopping cart processing versus bounce





Setup

Once you have the numbers you need, make a prognosis. What could the numbers look like after making the steps fully accessible:

- What if after 3 months organic search on homepage is 5-10-20% higher?
- What if conversion rates on the mentioned processes are 1-2-5% higher?
- What if you got 5% less phone calls or mails?



Well, that's it

- You can now use change management models to convince your clients
- You have plenty of arguments
- You have inspiration for helpful methods
- You know how to set up a business case for yourself.

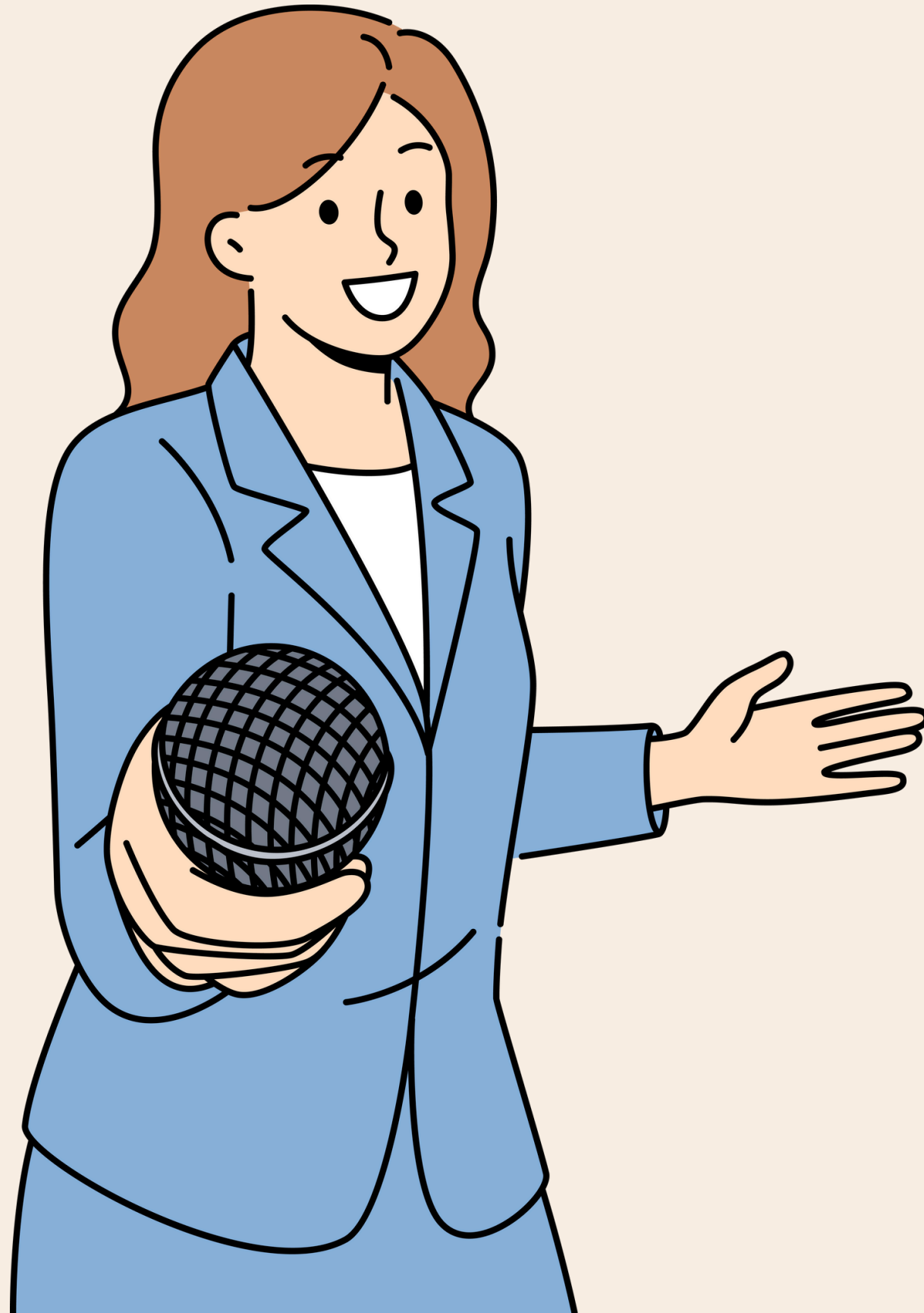


If you need our help, we're here.

www.accessibilitydesk.com or auto-
translate www.digitaaltoegankelijk.nl

Find us: we@digitaaltoegankelijk.nl





Questions?

I will take those now, thank you!



Digitaal Toegankelijk

