# How One Company is Working to Solve Web Inaccessibility

Shir Ekerling is on a mission to make every website digitally accessible for people with disabilities. His company accessiBe recently raised $12 million and hopes to solve Web inaccessibility by 2025.

“People aren’t aware that people with disabilities are even able to use websites,” Ekerling says. “When I started everything back in 2016, I was shocked that blind people can use the Internet. How can they use the Internet? They don’t see the screen. How is it even possible? Or people that cannot use their hands, how can they operate a mouse or a keyboard? How is it even possible? The more I got into it, I was shocked that they can. We want to show as many businesses as possible that people with disabilities can do everything that non-disabled clients do.”

Ekerling says accessiBe uses an AI-powered solution to help companies be more inclusive and ensure they are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). He talked with Jessica Abo about his company’s growth and what other businesses can do to be more inclusive.

**Can you tell us a little bit about accessiBe and why you started this company?**

**Shir Ekerling:** In 2016, Israel was one of the first countries in the world to start talking openly about a law regarding Web accessibility, specifically. Back then, I had a software agency, my two co-founders were with me in that, and our enterprise clients were the ones to drive us to explore

solutions for that upcoming regulation, so we were able to solve accessibility for them, for their own applications that we created for them. We figured that this is going to be a big problem, not just for enterprises, but especially for small businesses.

Twenty percent of the population is considered to have a disability that hinders their effectiveness of using websites. And the problem is even bigger when we think about what society is missing. Not even just for equality. When twenty percent — 1.5 billion people — are excluded or lack the resources that we have, because— Specifically, if I can talk about myself, I learned everything online. I am an engineer, front plus back, and do API architecture. Everything that I've learned, I've learned online. If they don't have access to that, they're not able to advance society as the rest of us.

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I'm working with a blind, young programmer, and he uses a screen reader, which is a software that is installed on the operating system of a blind use. It reads out or outputs by Braille what you've just typed. He writes entire programs like that. And the screen reader reads out the content that he types at 300 percent speed while listening to music. And you have so many people like this, so driven, so smart, but they lack the opportunity.

**Can you describe to us the process that accessiBe goes through to make a website accessible?**

**Ekerling:** What we have designed is something that you install with a single line of code. You take a single line of Javascript code from our website, in your profile on our site, and then install it in your template. Once you've done that, then accessiBe scans your website and understands your user behavior, how your website looks for people without visual

impairments, for people who are not blind. accessiBe runs on a site to understand the functionality and the elements that comprise it.

It also understands user behavior. After that process, accessiBe will use the WCAG, a 1000-page huge guidebook that explains what accessible websites look and operate like, and how to make inaccessible websites accessible. accessiBe uses techniques from the WCAG to remediate a website into compliance.

**What are some of the benefits of having an accessible website?**

**Ekerling:** First of all, there's regulation. Specifically, in the United States, the ADA mandates accessible websites since the end of 2018. The Department of Justice affirmed that websites are considered places of public accommodations. They need to comply with the ADA.

Reason number two, opening your site to additional revenue streams. People with disabilities comprise twenty percent of the population. That's a huge buying force. Essentially you are able to sell more if you can cater to a bigger audience. So that's reason number two.

Reason number three, corporate responsibility. Be on the good side, that's reputation. And there are a lot of other reasons. For SEO, for example, for ranking higher in Google, for example.

**I know that you're trying to service people with different abilities all around the world, but what does that cost a company? What are the monthly fees?**

**Ekerling:** accessiBe's cost is less than $500 a year. It's something that every business can afford, for the first time, actually, ever.

**Is there one piece of advice that you have that CEOs can be**

**taking to heart starting today?**

**Ekerling:** People need to educate themselves on how important it is to include twenty percent of the population in the modern era that is now excluded. That education and awareness is the number one thing that businesses should strive for. And what I also strive for, for my business and for raising awareness in general.

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