

# Digital Inclusion Begins with Accessibility

## 數碼共融由「無障礙」開始 Wilson Wong AHKIoD 黃家偉

**I**n today's fast-paced digital world, most companies are looking to increase their competitive strength by improving website design. But when competing for success, are companies aware that helping others actually helps them?

In recent years, more companies around the world have embraced a more empathetic approach in their digital transformation journeys by adopting accessibility principles when designing their websites and mobile applications. The principle behind this trend is to ensure that people with disabilities, such as visual, hearing, mobility or cognitive impairments, can visit websites without any obstructions, so that they can receive up-to-date information in the

ever-changing knowledge society.

Nowadays, companies across many industries are placing increasing emphasis on environmental, social and governance factors. With web accessibility becoming a significant trend in the business world, forward-looking management boards have been incorporating accessibility into their corporate culture and ensuring the new culture is rolled out effectively. Making online services easy to search by everyone not only helps companies perform better in business operation, but also helps to expand the company's client base. This, in turn, is generating unprecedented opportunities and facilitating business development.

Management boards should never fall behind in accessibility.



Especially when more enterprises and organisations are accelerating digital transformation in the “new normal” and are also on a mission to extend accessibility from the physical world to digital world to make the World Wide Web more inclusive and welcoming to all. In addition to bridging the digital divide, enterprises will also be able to add value to their businesses and strengthen their competitive advantages, while contributing to building a caring and inclusive society.

Having an accessible web design creates a “win-win” situation.

On the one hand, it enhances an enterprise’s branding and creates a positive and friendly image of a company that is fulfilling its corporate social responsibilities and complying with legal requirements regarding disability discrimination. It also helps enterprises catch up with global trends for diversity and inclusion.

On the other hand, accessible web design embraces digital inclusion by allowing all users to access the online platform, enriching their social lives and fostering inclusive employment opportunities.

Adopting good coding practice and optimising the user interface are perhaps the two most important requirements to design an accessible website or mobile application. These involve enhancing the content and information display to better serve the community of people with disabilities. The aim of incorporating accessible elements is to increase the general usability of websites and mobile apps for people with disabilities who routinely face challenges in navigating digital platforms. Perhaps surprisingly, it also makes all online services easier to maintain in a more cost-effective way. Moreover, accessibility improves users’ experience, which contributes to search engine optimisation and enables enterprises to rank more prominently in search results. This, in turn, allows businesses to reach more customers online and maximise their business opportunities. In short, removing obstacles for others also creates new paths for a company’s business growth.

Approximately 580,000 people in Hong Kong have a disability, according to the Census and Statistics Department. Since 2013, the Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme has been run with the aims of raising awareness of digital accessibility, promoting the adoption of barrier-free web design among enterprises, and bringing companies in line with international trends in corporate governance. The scheme recognises local

enterprises and organisations for their efforts in enhancing web accessibility.

Last year, the scheme received more than 400 applications and 93 percent of them have been recognised. Participating companies came from a wide range of sectors and industries, including information technology, property, retail, and banking. Under the scheme, enterprises can apply for the Gold Award, Silver Award or Friendly Website / Mobile App Recognition for their websites or mobile applications. Recognised organisations can display the respective logos on their websites and mobile applications. For further details, please visit <https://www.web-accessibility.hk/en/>. 

**Wilson Wong** is the Chief Executive Officer of Hong Kong Internet Registration Corporation Limited.

**在**瞬息萬變的數碼年代，企業都希望以別出心裁的網頁設計創造優勢。然而在努力爭勝同時，企業可曾想過，助人等於助己？

世界上有很多企業都發揮知己知彼、設身處地的精神，在網頁及流動應用程式中採用無障礙設計，讓有視覺、聽覺、行動或認知障礙的用戶都可如常瀏覽，在知識型社會中接觸最新資訊。

今天，各界企業除了增加業務競爭優勢外，還努力在環境保護、社會共融及公司治理幾方面多管齊下，與時並進。隨著無障礙網站成為營商新趨勢，有不少高瞻遠矚的企業董事會都積極考慮把「無障礙」元素列入企業管理文化，並確保這個概念能夠切實執行。

這不僅能夠幫助企業在業務營運上做到精益求精，更有助拓展客戶群、迎來前所未有的商業機遇。無論是各行各業的董事會及管理層，都必須緊貼全球步伐，才能在新世代中脫穎而出。尤其在「新常態」下，當企業紛紛加快數碼轉型，是時候把無障礙文化從現實帶進網絡世界，藉著縮短數碼落差為業務增值、提升競爭優勢，攜手創建和諧共融的社會。

無障礙網頁設計絕對會為企業帶來雙贏。

第一個「贏」歸於企業，除可建立親和友善的形象，還可履行企業社會責任及配合防止殘疾歧視要求，迎合全球的多元共融趨勢。

第二個「贏」屬於用戶，全人類盡享數碼共融，還可豐富社交

生活、開拓就業機會。無障礙設計的常見做法是優化網頁編碼和介面，有條不紊顯示內容。原意是提高網站的易用性，幫助殘疾人士，但同時也簡化了網站維護工作，倍添成本效益；並有助搜尋器搜索網站，提升網站在搜尋結果中的表現，因而接觸更多潛在客戶，促進商機。由此可見，為別人移除障礙，就是為自己開路。

政府統計處指出，香港約有58萬名殘疾人士。為推動企業層面的「無障礙」文化、一視同仁惠及有需要人士，同時與國際企業管治趨勢接軌，「無障礙網頁嘉許計劃」自2013年起致力表揚在這方面有卓越表現的企業，反應熱烈。綜觀去年逾400個申請，有近93%成功獲得嘉許，分別來自資訊科技、地產、零售及銀行界。合資格的企業網頁或流動應用程式可申請「金獎」、「銀獎」或「友善」嘉許級別，並向公眾展示嘉許標誌。詳情可瀏覽 [www.web-accessibility.hk/zh-hant/](http://www.web-accessibility.hk/zh-hant/)。

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