

# BENEFITS OF HAVING FOCUS ON WEB ACCESSIBILITY

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## Abstract

Almost every Swede has the possibility to connect to the Internet, often from a wide array of devices. But some people have difficulties to access the web due to disabilities. Disabilities that can present themselves in a variety of ways and can arise due to different causes, such as results of accidents, birth defects or fallout due to aging. There are two ways to handle this, to have good web accessibility and with aiding technology for people with needs, though some of these aids need the websites to be developed in a certain and accessible way to work properly. The challenge thereby is to find out how companies, both developers and clients, can create as well as gain value by working with web accessibility, as well as to find what these values can be. The conducted study has led to results showing that web accessibility can be value creating for businesses as well as for the users. Among the benefits are financial gains, lowered needs for customer support, reduced risk of legal actions, gains of good will and public relations, and the possibility of more potential customers.

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## Introduction

92 per cent of the Swedes have access to Internet at home and 78 per cent use it at an everyday basis. But everyone does not have the same preconditions when it comes to access and use of the web (Statistics Sweden, 2014).

According to the survey conducted by Statistics Sweden (SCB) 22 per cent of the Swedish population experience that they have a disability of some sort and 16 per cent of them claim to have some or large difficulties to use the internet due to

their disability and web pages not having been developed to meet their needs. This is why web accessibility is needed, to give these individuals a chance of using the Internet in a way that will benefit them. As more services and uses are added to the Internet each day, it gets more important to be able to access and use the Internet to take part of its advantages. And so there is potential value for companies to gain if they work towards being accessible and open for as many people and potential customers as possible (Word Wide Web Consortium, 2012), as well as fulfilling one of the

visions of Tim Berners-Lee, the founder of the World Wide Web.

*“Web accessibility is the tool to fulfil the demand that every individual should have the same conditions to use the World Wide Web, as it has long been one of the pillars of the web.”*

*Founder of the World Wide Web – Tim Berners-Lee  
(World Wide Web Consortium, 2012)*

## Background and problem motivation

Within the last couple of years the field of web accessibility have had an upswing in publicity and the further development of the field has truly begun. Governments of several countries as well as multi billion dollar companies have understood the importance of web accessibility and what it does for people with disabilities. Therefore efforts have been made towards paving the road for web accessibility even further.

- Sweden made changes to the law of discrimination; from January 1, 2015. It now states that every company with more than ten employees (with some exceptions) has to be accessible. (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2014)
- Norway introduced a new law July 1, 2015, stating that all new web sites have to be accessible. Older web sites have until 2021 to meet the requirements. (Dewire UX Team, 2014)
- Google changed their search algorithm so that searches from mobile devices show web pages that are developed for mobile devices. (Dewire Portals Team, 2015)

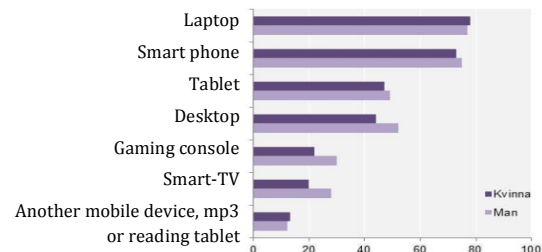
Along with these demands and recommendations there are a lot that companies can gain from making an effort in their work towards being more accessible for everyone, and those benefits are what this white paper will try to shed some light on.

### What is web accessibility?

Web accessibility is to help people overcome obstacles related to IT or the web, oftentimes these obstacles are related to disabilities. The difference in disabilities is almost as varied as the people having them. Disabilities can range from sight-, hearing-, physical-, linguistically related, cognitive to neurological challenges (World Wide Web Consortium, 2012). To handle different disabilities and the challenges they lead to web pages needs to be developed in such a manner that they can be understood and manoeuvred by everyone, regardless of disabilities or what kind of hard- or software they use to browse the web. As can be seen in Diagram 1, there are different ways to browse the Internet and a web page should be able to be

displayed at, if not all, at least most of the below listed hardware solutions in some manner.

Diagram 1: Different devices sorted by use for accessing Internet. Swedish citizens ages 16-85. (Statistics Sweden, 2014)



Today there are two major ways to make the web accessible for as many as possible, regardless of disabilities or preconditions. One way is to make use of help devices: such as screen readers or certain add-ons for the web browsers, among others. Some of these aids need websites to be presented, and thereby developed with extra care and special regards to certain functions, which is the second way. To develop the web sites using good principles, such as responsive design, which allows web sites to adjust to the device being used. Good principles are also to use certain colours for fonts and backgrounds, as to make them easy to read and so that the colours are not too similar. There are guidelines for developing accessible web pages provided by W3C (World Wide Web Consortium, 2008), in which there are recommendations of what is considered good principles regarding web accessibility. The laws and law changes done by the governments in Norway and Sweden are in some degree based upon these guidelines. Foremost the law in Norway is, as it dictates that new web pages must to some extent fulfil at least 35 out of the 61 guidelines found in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

### The benefits of web accessibility

By having a web page that have good web accessibility more people and therefore more potential customers have the ability to visit the web site and take part of what it has to offer. This may promote more companies and organizations to make their websites more accessible for more people and from more devices. Being accessible is not sharing everything with everyone, but instead everyone should be able to access information and services that they are allowed to.

- Financial gains and cost savings from increased web use due to increased usability and increased potential market share.

- Positive impact on search engine optimisation from accessibility improvements, considering the changes made by Google.
- Reduced risk of legal action, potentially resulting in high legal expenses.
- Public relations and good will benefits of demonstrating corporate social responsibility, provision of information and services that are accessible to all or at least most.
- Benefits of an inclusive work place that supports employees with disabilities.
- Accessible web pages and application can make it so that the product is easier to use, benefiting everyone and not only the individuals with disabilities.
- Increase productivity from supporting and retaining older employees and their experience, as the work force ages but keeps the habit of using the Internet.
- Reduced costs from customer support due to usability, customers find what the search for on

the web and do not have to call in to get support.

- Laws and policies that require public services to all, such as anti-discrimination legislation or information and communications technology policy.
- Benefits of Web accessibility to customers with older computer equipment, or low bandwidth Internet connection, enabling them to visit your web site.
- Organisation's interest in ensuring that its materials are available to all of its potential audience and customers.
- Competitive advantages and financial benefits of being able to meet increasing requests for accessible web design and development.
- Public relations benefits of being able to support clients' interests in demonstrating social responsibility.

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