

Accessibility + Inclusion for All

Ablr

Media Kit
[Ablr360.com](https://ablr360.com/)

**About Ablr**

Ablr is the leader of accessibility strategy and disability inclusion. Our mission is to equalize the lives of people with disabilities. We do this by providing companies with innovative accessibility and inclusion tools and solutions.

**MISSION** An equal blend of head and heart.

**Heart: It’s the Right Thing to Do**

“Accessibility and Inclusion for all” is not just our tagline, it's our heartbeat.

Everyone deserves to have the same opportunities. Globally, businesses are realizing accessibility and inclusion are not just boxes to check in order to keep them from a lawsuit. Accessibility and inclusion is a strategic move to fully optimize employees and customers with disabilities. Business Disability Forum and Royal Dutch Shell report that, in a study of 120 global brands, more than 90% of respondents stated that ‘disability inclusion is the right thing to do at a global level. The humanitarian core is undeniable.

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**Disability Impacts Everyone**Accessibility and disability and inclusion are also relatable. Over 20% of the population lives with a disability. There are several categories of disability:

* Visual - Blindness, low vision, color-blindness
* Auditory- Deafness and hard-of-hearing
* Motor - Inability to use a mouse, slow response time, limited fine motor control
* Cognitive - Learning disabilities, distractibility, inability to remember or focus on large amounts of information

On top of demographic numbers, the nature of disability is wide. Disability can be situational-such as holding a baby in your arms, temporary-such as a broken arm, broken or lost eyeglasses, or permanent. Also, as the population ages, disabilities acquire. Many baby boomers have aging-related issues that make using the web more challenging.

Chances are you know and care about someone who is disabled. What you might not know is the challenges they face with many of the everyday conveniences we take for granted, such as being able to access the web and mobile apps. Ablr is working to remove these barriers.

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**Head: It’s the Smart Thing to Do.**In the United States, it’s estimated the annual discretionary spending of people with disabilities is more than $200 billion. The global estimate is nearly $7 trillion. But if people with disabilities can’t understand or operate your website, you’re missing a lot of potential business.

Ablr helps companies understand the cultural and financial advantages they could be missing out on if they don’t allow for full access to their company as customers; and if they don’t utilize the strengths and talents of a diverse workforce.

The truth is, disability inequality impacts your business. Want proof? Companies that hired people with disabilities outperformed their peers and saw a wide variety of improvements. These businesses saw 72% more productivity, 45% better workplace safety, 30% higher profit margins and 200% higher net income. (Source: Accenture)

E-commerce retailers may be losing up to $6.9 billion annually to their competitors with more accessible websites.

**HOW ABLR DOES IT**Ablr is one of the only firms that employs Americans with disabilities to provide digital accessibility services instead of relying on automated checkers and overlay tools to do the job. We believe the human element truly makes accessibility real for the people who need it. As experts in WCAG standards as well as best practices in inclusive design, our digital accessibility team is uniquely qualified to perform accessibility testing.

We see technology services as a driver of employment for Americans with disabilities. To that end, we combine decades of business experience with our commitment to the blind and low vision community to bring an innovative approach to accessibility.

**ABLR’S BACKSTORY***“I often say coming to Ablr was like me coming out of the closet a blind person. It was the first time I could be open about who I was and be my authentic self.”*

Ablr is led by CEO John Samuel. He was diagnosed with a degenerative eye condition while in college, but he did not disclose his eye condition to professors or many other people. “I felt ashamed and didn't want people to know I was going blind,” said Samuel. His career took him all over the world, all the while his vision was diminishing. John thought he could make enough accommodations for himself to accomplish his work. “This ranged from finding a magnifying mouse that would let me enlarge content on my screen, to inverting the color of my display to help me see text better,” said Samuel. John says although he was facing issues navigating the web and using apps on his phone, he didn't know these were accessibility barriers. The word accessibility was not yet in his vocabulary.

That changed in 2017 when a friend with the same disease gave Samuel life altering advice: if he wanted to continue his career trajectory, he needed to learn as a blind person. And that’s exactly what he did. Samuel began using a screen reader, a form of assisted technology that allows visually impaired users to read the text displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display. He also started disclosing his disability when applying for jobs.

That’s when [LCI](https://www.lcindustries.com) came knocking for John. LCI is one of the largest employers of Americans who are blind or visually impaired, creating meaningful careers and lasting skills that transform lives. LCI creates more than 2,000 products and distributes thousands more through manufacturing, retail, nationwide distribution, and e-commerce channels. In 2017, LCI approached John about launching their new tech division, LCI Tech - now known as [Ablr.](https://ablr360.com)

**MEET OUR TEAM
JOHN SAMUEL,** Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, CEO
John Samuel impacts businesses and people with innovative strategies on digital accessibility. His experience includes stints in domestic and international industries over the last 13 years. While launching and serving as the CEO for Aster Cameroon, a global telecom infrastructure joint venture, he built a $45 million business bringing internet access across Africa.

Afterward, he became an early member of Homestrings, a USAID backed crowdfunding platform, where he raised capital for startups in emerging markets. John holds his MBA from George Washington University, BS in Accounting from North Carolina State University and Certified Professional in Accessible Core Competencies (CPACC).

At Ablr, John focuses on helping organizations become more inclusive by making digital content accessible for people of all abilities and providing career paths in the knowledge economy for people with disabilities.

John was selected in the Triangle Business Journal’s 2019 40 Under 40 Leadership Award and The Business Journals’ Influencers: Rising Stars which spotlights 100 executives across the country who are having an impact early in their careers on business being done in cities across the nation.

**MIKE IANNELLI,** Co-founder & Chief Strategy Officer, CSO
Mike is a hybrid executive with tenure in firms from both the client and agency side. Mike leads a talented team of thoughtful strategists to deliver a unique blend of strategic, analytical and creative thinking. Under his direction, they are able to simplify even the most complex analysis and formulate meaningful insights for clients.

As a performance marketing wild card, with a lot of unexpected brilliant late night or last minute ideas that are absolutely pivotal in the process, Mike also leads the strategy, execution and optimization of paid media channels for our clients including — search, social, native, programmatic, display, video, affiliate marketing, email marketing and SEO. Having worked with national and global brands like Kate Spade, Hanes Brands, NFL, Dick’s Sporting Goods and Outback Steakhouse, he boasts over 20 years of data-driven experience in performance marketing.

**JEFFREY HAWTING,** Board of Directors
Jeffrey brings both professional experience and personal passion to his role of President at LCI. Before coming to LCI, Jeffrey worked for over two decades in diverse organizations from non-profits to global Fortune 100 companies.

With equally diverse roles in sales management, operations, marketing and more, his enterprise-level perspective allows us to look to the future with confidence. His current focuses are team development, process improvement, and new business development…but his anchor is employment for the blind and visually impaired.

**BILL HUDSON**, Board of Directors
Over a fifty-year career, Bill Hudson led with passion, vision and courage to build a thriving business with one singular focus – to find meaningful employment for people who are blind. As a true entrepreneur, Bill was always ready to seize on new opportunities to grow and expand business across multiple channels. From a small Durham based manufacturing operation that made only one product – mattresses – Bill expanded into multiple product lines now making over 2500 different products.

In the mid-90s Bill capitalized on government procurement changes to develop an innovative retail solution supporting our nation's military which in 2020 now supports over 155 retail stores on military bases employing many people who are blind. Not satisfied with that growth Bill expanded into government distribution and more recently was the impetus behind LCI's entry into technology services.

**DONALD THOMPSON,** Board of Directors
With two decades of experience growing and leading firms, Donald Thompson is a thought leader on goal achievement, influencing company culture and driving exponential growth. As an entrepreneur, Donald has led companies which have attained successful exits with strong returns for shareholders and employees.

Donald is an angel investor personally infusing over a million dollars in North Carolina ventures alone. Adept at building teams that accelerate growth, Donald is also a founder of [The Diversity Movement](https://thediversitymovement.com) and CEO of [Walk West](https://walkwest.com), a digital marketing firm led by more than 70% women and/or African Americans, and is recognized by Inc. as the one of the fastest growing companies in the US for 2018, 2019 and 2020.

**KEVIN ERICKSON,** Accessibility Manager
Kevin brings more than 10 years of experience specializing in digital accessibility with web and mobile design and build. He comes to the Ablr team from Virginia, where most recently he served as an accessibility consultant at Level Access, providing accessibility guidance, testing, execution, and training.

Prior to his time at Level Access, Kevin worked for the Virginia Department of Education as well as the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services helping solve clients’ performance and usability challenges from start to finish. Kevin holds a degree in computer science and multiple certifications including as a Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) and Certified Scrum Master (CSM).

**CARLA SMITH,** Technology Services Representative
Carla conducts usability and accessibility tests on websites and other digital content based on international standards. She joins the Ablr team after a 38-year career with the NC Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security, where she supported claimants and employers. Carla is currently working towards becoming a CPACC.

When Carla is not knocking down accessibility barriers, she is knocking down pins as a member of the Raleigh Outlaws bowling league!

**SHANNON GARNER,** Technology Services Representative
As a member of the Ablr tech team, Shannon conducts accessibility tests on websites using a screen reader. Prior to joining the Ablr team, she spent two years working on the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service contract at HP in El Paso, TX. Shannon also received her certification of completion in hospitality and contact centers from the National Statler Center for Careers in Hospitality Service in Buffalo, NY. Shannon earned her Certification in Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC) in 2019.

Not only is Shannon aiming to eliminate accessibility issues, she is also aiming at the bullseye as a member of the National Blind Dart League!

**ALYSSA CHEESEMAN,** Digital Accessibility Analyst
Alyssa specializes in identifying accessibility issues using the combination of a screen reader and screen magnification software and makes recommendations based on international standards. She is a recent graduate with a BA in Sociology from the University of Florida in Gainesville. Alyssa received her Certification in Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC) in 2019.

When Alyssa is not weaving ideas into reality, she is weaving yarn into blankets.

**MATT KROMBACH,** Solutions Consultant
Matt grew up in Raleigh, NC and attended Appalachian State University in the mountains of NC to pursue his interest in broadcast media. He graduated in 2017 with a BA in Electronic Media/Broadcasting and a fine-tuned radio voice stemming from his time on the airwaves of his student radio station.

Today, he puts his voice and sales skills to work for Ablr. Inspired by the work of Carolina Hurricanes' sensory inclusion program, he works diligently to help companies build accessibility and inclusion into their organizations from the ground up. He won’t stop until Ablr becomes the first choice for accessibility and even then he will keep educating and advocating for disability inclusion. When you talk to Matt you realize quickly that he has invested his whole heart in Ablr.

**KIM CASEY**, Accessibility Consultant
Kim started her career with Sendero Group, a company that has been dedicated to finding accessible solutions for independent wayfinding for close to two decades. Kim filled many positions over that time, starting as manager in sales, marketing, training and product management to ultimately being promoted to CEO. Kim has knowledge of various information dissemination and training mediums: World Wide Web, Audio, Video, and Print Publishing. Ms. Casey has authored and participated on several federally funded grants totaling over $4.0 mm since 2001 for the development of Accessible Wayfinding tools. She has presented at many industry conferences and possesses a proficiency for public speaking.

**TRACKER**, Official Guide Dog
Tracker (Track Star) is the first guide dog of Ablr. Tracker is an energetic, 60-pound, yellow Labrador Retriever; born in San Rafael, California. Tracker joined Ablr after graduating in 2016 from Guide Dogs for the Blind in Boring, Oregon, as the companion of Shannon Garner. When Tracker isn’t making things more accessible for Shannon by guiding her around physical barriers, you can find him nudging her under the desk with his favorite Nyla bone in his mouth!

**SHARON DELANEY MCCLOUD**, Public Relations & Marketing
Sharon Delaney McCloud is an Emmy Award-winning broadcaster, TEDx Speaker, Certified Diversity Executive CDE®, agency owner, Olympic Torch Bearer, and author who helps leaders & teams improve communication and build resilience to drive business results. Through her professional development practice at Walk West, a full-service marketing agency, Sharon works with C-Suite executives and emerging leaders on developing their message and delivering it with confidence and impact. Prior to launching her company, Sharon spent 20 years as a television journalist covering everything from NASA to politics to the Super Bowl at stations across the country.

**ABLR FAQS**

**COMPANY
Who is Ablr?**We are a team of passionate people with different experiences and abilities focused on delivering disability, inclusion and accessibility strategies. Our mission is to eliminate the barriers that have excluded people with disabilities from many aspects of life and promote inclusivity for all people. We do this by providing companies with the tools and resources to break down accessibility and cultural barriers. Our vision is to remove the barriers of unconscious bias around disabilities.

**Why was Ablr created?**Through our lived experiences, we understand the challenges that many people in the disability community face when trying to access digital content on the web, and we knew we had to do something about it.

**COMPLIANCE
Why is digital accessibility important in the first place?**Simply stated, accessibility is a civil right. People of all abilities rely on the web for education, health care, entertainment, shopping, and employment, and we need to ensure that people who use assistive technology can do so, as well.

**What are the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements?**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

**ABLR FAQS**The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

While the internet was not around when the ADA became law, certain websites accessible to the public fall under the same umbrella of protection. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion.

As a civil rights statute, the DOJ has the lead role

in enforcing the ADA by investigating complaints from aggrieved parties and filing discrimination suits on their behalf.

Disabled individuals may also bring their own private claims against businesses for alleged violations, and indeed such private lawsuits have constituted the bulk of ADA litigation since 1990.

**What are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is developed through the W3C process in cooperation with individuals and organizations around the world, with a goal of providing a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the

needs of individuals, organizations, and governments internationally. The WCAG documents explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.

**What are the incentives for compliance?**Simply said, it’s a civil right. According to Gartner research:

* By 2023, digital products that are WCAG compliant will outperform their market competitors by 50%.
* By 2025, all G20 countries — which account for 90% of the global world products will establish enforceable legal standards for digital accessibility, leading to a moment, in which businesses scramble to achieve compliance.

**What happens to websites, apps and other digital User Interfaces that are not compliant?**

* Organizations that forgo a digital accessibility program incur the risk of legal action, leading to potentially significant financial losses. In the absence of a digital accessibility program, organizations also exclude people with disabilities, alienating up to 46% of the addressable market – which includes people with disabilities, and their friends and families.
* Digital products that are not accessible, tend to have poor content and coding practices, resulting in suboptimal organic search engine rankings.
* Digital products that exclude people with disabilities are subject to negative word-of-mouth and reporting, resulting in brand erosion and loss of customer loyalty.

**What types of disabilities does Ablr’s accessibility services help?**We provide accessibility services that primarily focus on people with disabilities, but many accessibility requirements improve usability for all people – no matter their ability. This includes those in limiting situations, such as:

* Providing sufficient contrast benefits people using the web on a mobile device in bright sunlight or in a dark room.
* Captions benefit people in noisy and in quiet environments.
* Some people have age-related functional limitations and may not identify these as “disability”.

**Accessibility includes:**

* Requirements that are technical and relate to the underlying code rather than to the visual appearance. For example, they ensure that websites work well with assistive technologies. This includes screen readers that read aloud content, and screen magnifiers that enlarge content. Voice recognition software used to input text is another form of assistive technology. These aspects are typically not a focus of usability research and practice.

Requirements that relate to user interaction and visual design. Inadequate design can cause significant barriers for people with disabilities. That is why they are included. For example, understandable instructions and feedback for website forms and applications is good usability. They also help people with cognitive and learning disabilities. Without such requirements, some people with disabilities may be excluded from using the Web.

**How does Ablr’s process cover all accessibility needs?**Accessibility compliance is an ongoing process and it requires regular maintenance as new content and products are developed. As functionality is updated or development and upkeep responsibilities change hands, it is important to provide monitoring, testing, and remediation and Ablr covers all of these areas.

**PLATFORM

What standards or guidelines does Ablr.’s accessibility services use?** WCAG 2.1 AA which includes Section 508.

**What is the difference between Ablr and its competitors and why should companies choose Ablr’s accessibility services?**There are a lot of firms that claim to provide accessibility services, but we are one of the only firms that not only can help make your website and digital content accessible, but also make sure that it is actually usable for people with disabilities. We are able to do this because many of our certified testers are blind or low vision and are everyday users of assistive technologies and we provide user experience in our reporting.

**What kind of report(s) does Ablr’s accessibility services produce? For instance, can clients know how Ablr’s process is performing?**Ablr’s accessibility services produce a detailed report with all violations found along with methods on remediating, impacts to the user and information to help strategize a remediation plan.

**Is there something Ablr’s accessibility services does not address? Are there technological limitations, and if so, why?**We cater to all the accessibility needs of our clients including training audits, validation testing, reporting, monitoring, conformance statements, and ACR (Accessibility Conformance Report) / VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility template) creation.

**Can Ablr’s accessibility services assist me in Canada, the EU or elsewhere?**Absolutely. We are aligned with the current, international standards of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) level 2.1 AA which covers both public and private sectors.

**GETTING STARTED**

**How do I get started today if I want to make my website compliant in accessibility?**Contact us through email, form or phone to schedule a call with one of our dedicated reps so we can custom fit an accessibility audit for you.