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Start with digital documents to make your workplace more accessible

FIVE WAYS TO BUILD THE OPTIMAL HYBRID WORKPLACE

The workplace has officially entered the new phase of modernization and it's driven by rapid technological advancements, but that doesn't mean the hybrid workplace is working seamlessly – yet.

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Start with digital documents to make your workplace more accessible

BrandPost • By Abhigyan Modi, Senior Vice President of Adobe Document Cloud

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Employee Experience

PDFs are fundamental to the way we live and work. It's important for organizations to make these digital documents accessible to as many people as possible through inclusive technologies.

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In today's rapidly evolving work and customer landscape, accessibility is a crucial consideration in ensuring employees and customers can fully participate in the experiences brands provide – and generally part of being a responsible corporate citizen.

However, a recent Adobe survey found that only about half of brands are investing in making experiences more accessible for customers (51%) and employees (48%). While there is a myriad of benefits companies will not realize if they don't make their experiences more accessible, there are also some very real consequences. For example, the same survey found 85% of consumers say they will decrease spending if companies do not make their customer experiences accessible, and 29% say they'll refuse to spend any money at all.

There are nearly endless initiatives technology leaders can undertake to make both the workplace and their customers' experiences more accessible. Once place every organization can start is the digital documents their employees and customers use every day.

Design with broad accessibility in mind

Improving the digital experience begins with design considerations that meet the needs of all customers and employees, including those with disabilities. Regardless of their age, ability or experience, everyone reads differently and can benefit from a more tailored

reading experience.Adobe formed **The Readability Consortium** with University of Central Florida (UCF), Readability Matters, and Google to help make digital reading and reading comprehension more equitable for all people across the globe with cognitive research, open-source tools, and user testing across a wide swath of age groups and abilities levels.

As part of this work, Adobe research scientists recently **published** two papers that provide user-centered, inclusive design recommendations based on user and reading tests to populations with and without dyslexia.

The research **reveals** that all readers benefit from alternative reading formats and custom interfaces, rather than a one-size-fits-all format. Between character, word, and line spacing, preferences vary from person to person.

Technology leaders who prioritize tools that provide both flexibility and support for a myriad of reading styles and abilities will create an environment where stakeholders can participate fully and thus both receive value and give value back to the brand.

Bring AI to PDFs

About 30 years ago, Adobe invented the PDF format and then outsourced it to the world. Today, our experts put the total number of PDFs in circulation at a conservative *3 trillion*. What started as a way to preserve formatting and intent has developed into one of the foundational formats and enablers of digital transformation. Ensuring that the loads of PDFs in your organization are accessible to the broadest range of employees and customers possible presents an opportunity to increase both productivity and the quality of relationship with your most important stakeholders.

Basic accessibility tools like screen readers and tagging technology have existed for years, but bridging the digital accessibility gap has continued to be a manual, time-consuming process requiring extensive training and experience. Also, government regulations like the **European Accessibility Act** and user expectations are only increasing, which is important for companies that want to compete globally.

While this may feel daunting, artificial intelligence now provides a way for technology leaders to successfully tackle what have been expensive, difficult – and sometimes even impossible – accessibilities initiatives.

Adobe has continued to innovate PDF accessibility for decades, introducing Acrobat features such as PDF Read Out Loud and readability features in Sensei AI-powered Liquid Mode for Acrobat Reader Mobile. Recently, we **introduced** the Adobe PDF Accessibility Auto-

Tag API to help companies automate the process of making digital documents more accessible. The API also leverages the power of Adobe Sensei AI to improve PDF accessibility for customers who use screen readers.

The new API automates and scales the process of tagging content structure and reading order inside PDFs—from long-form text to mixed-content documents across different languages—helping individuals with disabilities like blindness, low vision, and dyslexia who use assistive technologies navigate a PDF. It also enables developers to apply the API to large backlogs of existing PDFs saving time and budget, while complying with the latest accessibility regulations.

Early adopters are already getting value from the API, with results showing up to 100% improvement in the accessibility and usability of a PDF for people with disabilities and ability to tag up to 100 pages in less than a minute. For example, a global financial firm automated 70-80% of its process to make slide decks accessible – a process that initially took more than 9 hours for each deck.

Bridging the gap

Today, technology leaders have many tools available to help make their customer and employee experiences more accessible and enjoyable. From how technology is designed to how information is consumed, if tech leaders step up they can play a starring role in creating an environment where all employees and customers can participate fully and without barriers.

For more information about how to make PDFs more accessible, read **Adobe's checklist to PDF accessibility**.

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