

Don't I just need to fix the website?

Perhaps counter-intuitively, jumping straight in and making fixes to your website isn't the place to start, not if you want to achieve and maintain compliance - and ultimately remove ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) risk. Like building a house, you need to put solid foundations in place first, before you start laying the bricks.

The website 'fixit' approach isn't working

Diving in and 'fixing' the website has been the approach most organizations have taken to date – and it clearly isn't working. In the last five years, two things have risen sharply – spend on compliance initiatives and litigation, without any noticeable improvement in compliance, underlining that the approach, and spend to date has not been effective (even wasted). Organizations, in good faith, have contracted with and listened to the promises of vendors – but have been lacking the ability to independently understand their own position and oversee improvements.

The continuous break and fix cycle

Organization are wasting millions-of-dollars continually running audits, generating technical reports, and making 'fixes' to their website. Whilst 'fixes' must be applied to achieve compliance, the current approach of diving into the diagnostic detail without putting solid foundations in place first, is at the heart of the problem and leads to a continuous cycle of fix, break, fix and then break again. This is both expensive and time consuming; putting solid foundations in place, before starting the 'fixing' work, is the key to making 'fixes' *once* – achieving compliance cost effectively, and then moving into a compliance maintenance phase.

Solid foundations

Until there is accountable contracting with vendors, staff are trained, 'fixes' are prioritized and managed, i.e. the work monitored and independently verified, the vicious cycle of break and fix will persist – compliance will not improve and organizations will continue be at risk.

Contracting with vendors

A vendor is any organization, contractor, agency, software, widget or platform provider that works on or provides services for your website. If they do not provide accessible products or services, your compliance initiatives are derailed before you even begin. Robust contracts that ensure vendor accountability, is a foundational cornerstone that you must put in place before 'fixit' work begins – including with technicians or consultants (just another type of vendor) that you may have contracted to make the 'fixes' for you.

Staff training

Content publishers and website technicians don't get it wrong on purpose, they just don't know how to do it right. Ensuring that staff are adequately trained and have the confidence to fix problems and 'get it right first time' is fundamental in stopping the break and fix cycle.

Prioritization

Where to start? Website accessibility audits often report thousands of ADA failures across your website. Prioritization of those fixes that will have the biggest impact on your compliance position is imperative, as is a way to independently monitor and verify that the work has been successful in removing compliance failures.

Monitoring and independent verification

Risk leaders, compliance managers and executives need their own, independent reporting, in a non-technical format, allowing them to clearly understand their ADA exposure and subsequent risk - not be fed the technical reports those doing the work, and vendors, want to share.

A risk management approach

Until organizations treat this as an ongoing organizational risk to manage, rather than a web or IT team problem to solve – organizations will continue to be at risk and spend on compliance initiatives will not be effective (even wasted).

Find about how to remove ADA risk and reduce the cost and effort of achieving ADA compliance with AAAtraq's Continuous Protection (CP), ADA Risk Control Program.