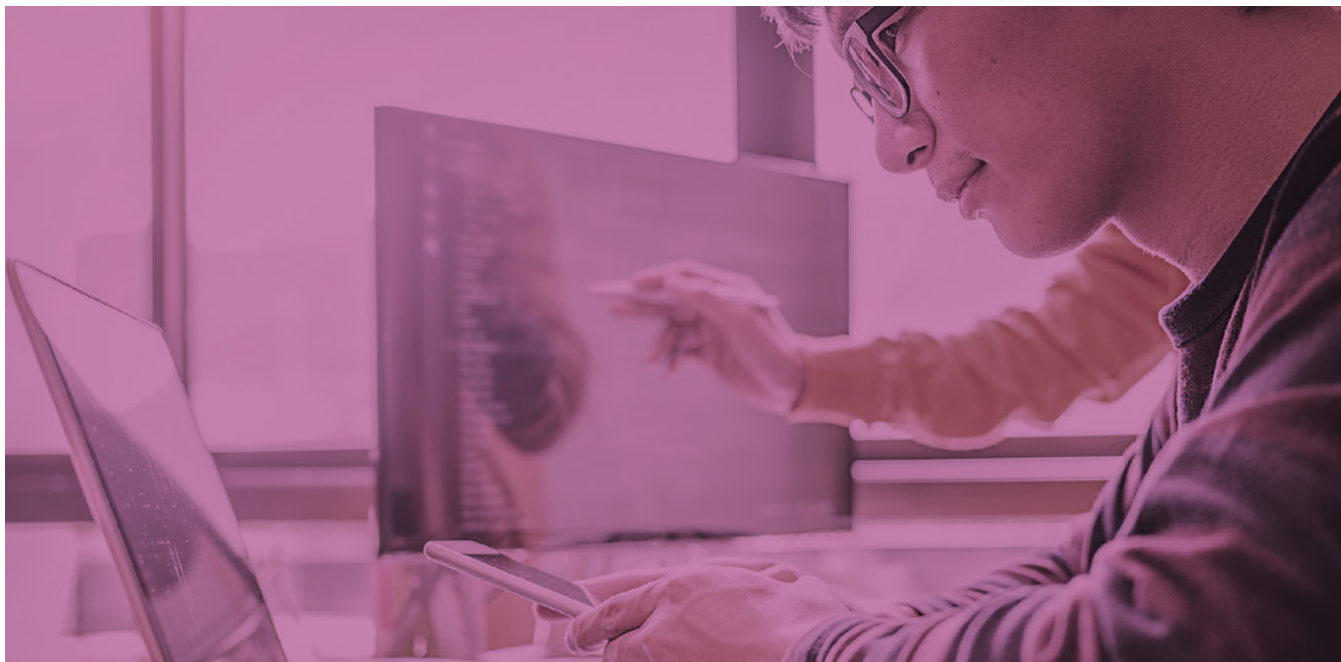# ADA Compliance: Not Only the Law, but Good Business

Article by Jeanne Pelletier, COO, Beyond Indigo Pets

Conversation is happening within the veterinary space regarding website compliance with ADA (American Disability Act). Veterinarians are wondering if this affects their websites or current and potential clients.

What can you do to become ADA-compliant and how much does it cost to do so? For this article, Jeanne Pelletier, COO of Beyond Indigo, will give us an update on this trend that she has been following closely. She will cover the buzz about ADA website compliance and discuss how to make a website compatible for people with disabilities.

Many of our veterinary practices have asked us about ADA compliance for their websites. Recent lawsuits, one involving a veterinarian, have not only raised awareness but also caused small businesses to fear that they may be next.

The ADA is a civil rights act designed to make accommodations available to disabled people, which allow them to fully participate in public life. Since it was signed into law in 1990, when websites were nonexistent, they weren't specifically included in the statute. In recent years, however, the law has been interpreted by various courts to include website accessibility.

There are no ADA government inspectors checking to make sure that websites are accessible. Federal guidelines for ADA accessibility were in the works, but were pulled back by the Trump administration last December. Rather, individual court cases are the main determinant of accessibility compliance. Some have resulted in a settlement or a judgment against a business.

Regardless of any legislation, ADA accessibility makes good business sense for veterinary practices for two reasons: First, almost 1 in 5 Americans has a disability or functional limitation of some sort. Many of these people have pets, so you want your website to reach as many pet owners

as possible. Second, most of the practices that make your website ADA-accessible are the same ones that make for great SEO and general usability.

How can you tell if your website is ADA compliant? The best way is to talk to your webmaster, as reliable testing gets quite technical. If you are a Chrome user, you can install the Lighthouse Extension. Lighthouse is a free auditing tool that identifies a number of site issues, including accessibility. Be careful of online tests that ask you to give them your information. If your site is more than three years old, chances are it may not be accessible unless it's been updated regularly.

Some accessibility do's and don'ts

No matter how you test, here are some simple actions you can take to make your site more accessible. This is by no means an exhaustive list, so please check with your webmaster for full accessibility information.

- **Don't rely solely on audio or video for important content.** Make sure to offer various ways for users to access the information contained in a video or audio. Include captions for hearing-impaired viewers, and transcripts and clear descriptions of what you are doing for sight-impaired people. Be as descriptive as possible in the video itself. For example, "I'm taking the palm of my right hand and placing it under the dog's chin," not only helps impaired viewers, it makes the instructions clearer to everyone else.
- **Do make sure important information is readable as text.** Charts or other information should never be presented only in a photo; make it text, instead, so that it can be read by assistive technologies. The rule of thumb is that everything on your website that is a photo or illustration must be understandable without it. This also makes your website faster and easier to read for everyone.
- **Do make sure photos are labeled correctly and descriptively.** Use "dog looking out of window" versus "photo." This lets assistive readers share these with vision-impaired site visitors.
- **Don't forget people who can't use a mouse.** Users should be able to tab through the site with a keyboard (also important for assistive readers). Ask your webmaster to code your website so that users can navigate your site without a mouse and skip to the main content easily.

- **Do use legible fonts and high-contrast colors for easy readability.** Users should also be able to increase the font size on their browser and still be able to use the site. No one wants to squint at a website in order to read it.
- **Don't convey important information through color alone.** Make sure there are other cues so that color-blind users don't miss out. This gives all of your users an extra heads up about key content.
- **Do make sure any forms on your website can be used with assistive technology.** Ensure all fields can be filled out, and that alternatives are available for CAPTCHA filters. Fast, easy forms also convert better, especially since your users may be on a mobile device.

Beyond Indigo has been conducting internet marketing for 21 years. Our CEO and COO have each been working in marketing online for 23 years. Our team knows the old and the new, as well as how to generate revenue and tails through the door. We focus on results first and discuss costs second. We are committed to staying up to date with the changing online environment, such as ADA Compliance. Plus, we are Google Ads Partners, and we know how to build Google mobile-friendly and fast websites. Need help creating a marketing plan? Call 877.244.9322, ext. 100, or go to https://www.beyondindigopets.com/contact/.

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Jeanne Pelletier, Beyond Indigo COO, has had a front-row seat to the development of digital marketing, first as a developer, then marketer, then manager. For the last 21 years, she has shepharded Beyond Indigo from a two-person website company to a robust digital marketing agency with employees all over the US. She loves seeing veterinary practices grow through the results Beyond Indigo produces. She also works as a doorman for her cat Calix, who expects her to be ever-ready.

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