

of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek99/resources.htm>). Finally, the National Organization on Disability has a short Web section on resources for marketing to people with disabilities (<http://www.nod.org/marketing/index.cfm>) (see Resources, page 59).

Use current laws to motivate your company to create accessible goods or services.

Morality *can* be legislated. Many companies once considered accessibility the moral choice but not the wise choice. With the advent of Section 255 of the 1998 Telecommunications Act and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, such companies can follow their values and make a profit. Many companies responded to Section 508 by hiring Accessibility Champions (see Resources, page 61).

One company had already started to make its product accessible when Section 255 went into effect. Even though its accessibility efforts were beyond those mandated by Section 255, the existence of the federal regulation helped the company implement the planned accessibility.

In another case, a company that had wanted to provide accessibility but was not able to make a business case for it found that Section 508 provided an opportunity to both make a profit and fulfill its corporate values. Those companies that had already begun to plan for accessibility had an advantage when Section 508 became a reality. At the same company, in the words of its AC, “Section 508 became the carrot—the promise of sales. It was a reward for doing the right thing.”

Finally, in a third software company, an AC explained, “Demand from customers for 508 compliance helped to get the accessibility started.”

Demonstrate the profitability of access.

“Volume and profit are the motivators,” stated one Accessibility Champion. Creating profit is the most effective best practice. For-profit companies exist to earn money for their owners and

stockholders, so for initiatives to be sustained within a company, they must contribute to the bottom line.

ACs must demonstrate that accessible products can lead to increased sales, a larger market, or relief from regulation and fines. The federal government is the biggest customer for many software and hardware manufacturers. When Section 508 required companies to make their communications, services, and products accessible to people with disabilities, the remarkable corporate response demonstrated how effective the economic incentive for creating access can be.

According to Gregg Vanderheiden of the Trace Center, “Only one factor, return on investment (or profit), results in [accessibility] in any widespread or consistent fashion over time. Moreover, the return on investment in accessibility must be perceived to be greater than other possible investment of the same resources.” (Vanderheiden and Vanderheiden 2002). The Trace Center at the University of Wisconsin–Madison was founded in 1971, and Trace has been a pioneer in the field of technology and disability (see Resources, page 60).

Tie access to mainstream product needs.

One Accessibility Champion noted, “The primary marketplace is the mainstream,” meaning that most companies need to sell a large volume of products to the broadly defined public to survive.

Although companies will readily concede the need for their products to be easy to use, many E&IT products and services are confusing and difficult to use. One tactic to improve accessibility for people with disabilities is to tie accessibility to usability. Usability is the concept that a product—computer, software, PDA, etc.—should be both useful and usable for the intended audience.

People in the company who want better usability are potential allies. Together you can argue, “If we have good usability, we sell more and have fewer returns and better customer satisfaction.”

“Good usability practices will make your products more usable for all,” remarked one AC.