

Mobile Application Accessibility: Are you prepared?

Summary

This document provides an overview of mobile accessibility, a discussion of its importance, and information on how to assess and remediate mobile applications to ensure accessibility.

This white paper is authored by Deque Systems, whose Amaze and WorldSpace software platforms and consulting services help Fortune 500 companies, major government agencies, and educational institutions achieve the benefits from being fully accessible.

More information is available at www.deque.com.



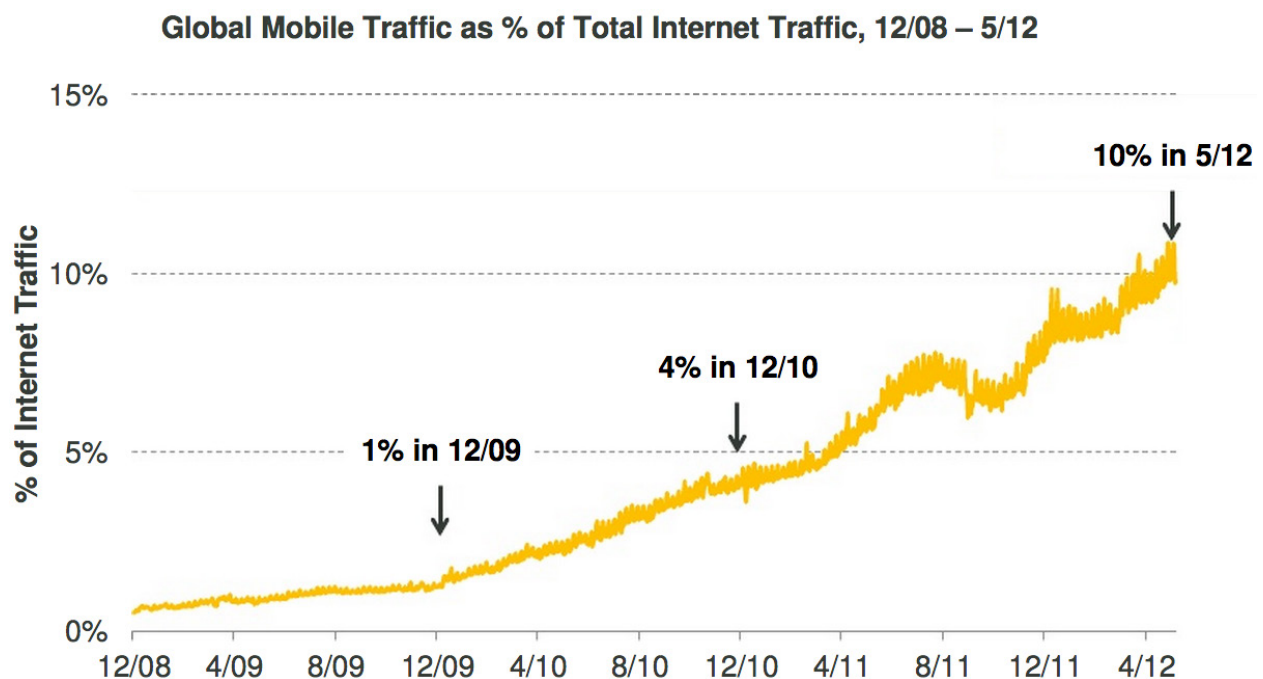
Why is Mobile Accessibility Important?

As organizations evaluate the accessibility of their digital content, paying attention to mobile is becoming increasingly important for a variety of reasons. Mobile usage is exploding, with more users than ever relying on a smartphone or tablet to access information, use services, and make purchases online. Mobile usage is also growing among the disabled, who enjoy the convenience and built-in accessibility features that are native to many mobile devices. Additionally, the requirement to make mobile apps and content accessible is becoming an increasing focus of legal and regulatory settlements.

Mobile usage is exploding

Very likely your organization is investing or will soon invest in mobile resources because of how popular mobile computing has become. As the following graph demonstrates, mobile traffic has more than doubled from 2010 to 2012. Further, nearly 50% of all Americans now have a smartphone.

Mobile Growth: Overall % of Internet Traffic



Source: Kliner Perkins 2012 Internet Trends Analysis | StatsCounter Global Stats

Mobiles usage is growing among people who are disabled

The need for an awareness and plan for mobile accessibility exists also because of the prominent role that mobile computing plays in the community of disabled users.

Accessibility has a higher profile on mobile platforms

Apple's iOS built in an unprecedented package of accessibility features into its operating system. This has resulted in enthusiastic adoption by many consumers who are disabled, and it's also set the bar for what's possible when a mobile device manufacturer commits to accessibility.

This is not to say that any app created for an iPhone or iPad is automatically accessible—developers still need to code the apps to pay attention to accessibility guidelines and to take advantage of the features that Apple makes available.

Apple's commitment raised awareness about mobile across the board, and increased scrutiny on other platforms and devices, such as Amazon's Kindle, that ended up being not as accessible. For example, there were immediate lawsuits in higher education where there were experiments at using the Kindle in the classroom.

Convenience is greatly valued

Mobile devices within the disability community are also valued, not surprisingly, because of their convenience. Like all of us, powerful mini-computers with apps that enhance our work, leisure activities and daily lives are enjoyable, enriching and helpful. There are apps that help people who are blind pick out clothes, navigate city streets, and cook meals. Like all of us, people who are disabled greatly value the convenience and utility of mobile devices, and, as a result, they are purchasing them in increasing numbers and using them more.

Mobile is beginning to appear in legal settlements

Because of all this—the growth in popularity and use, the immediate awareness of issues of accessibility on mobile platforms, the importance of mobile devices to many people who are disabled—it's not surprising that legal activity is beginning to expand its focus to encompass mobile applications in settlement activities.

First Addendum to MLB Settlement Agreement

One recent example is the expansion of Major League Baseball's structured settlement. MLB had a structured settlement in place already that required them to make their web properties accessible. In the spring of 2012, that structured settlement was expanded to include the requirement that MLB's mobile applications be made accessible as well.



In January of 2013, the employment web site monster.com entered into a settlement that required them to make both their web site and their mobile applications accessible. We believe this trend will continue. Legal and regulatory attention will quickly, and over time automatically, encompass the need for mobile applications to be accessible.

What is Mobile Accessibility?

At a high level, mobile accessibility is similar to other forms of digital accessibility. It's making sure that mobile versions of your site and your mobile applications are usable by people with disabilities. It means making certain that apps take advantage of the assistive technologies built into mobile operating systems when it is necessary to do so, and it means making sure the design of the application doesn't present barriers to users who are disabled.

Mobile accessibility means that if you have a mobile version of your web site on the market today, you need to evaluate whether it's accessible. Whether you have an app in the Apple app store or an Android version, you need to have it reviewed to determine whether it's accessible.

If that evaluation finds there are accessibility problems, your organization is at risk, and you should plan to remediate and address the issues. If you are planning on investing in mobile applications, then making sure to think about accessibility as important part of the design process. From an opportunity standpoint, you can cultivate an enthusiastic audience of users in the disabled community who value the convenience of mobile apps and services.

How Can Deque Assist with Mobile Accessibility?

Deque can help your mobile apps and web sites become accessible in a number of ways. Our WorldSpace Sync software performs automated testing of web applications, including mobile versions of web sites. It's possible to test the accessibility of your site for users with specific mobile devices. Automated testing of mobile versions of sites is easy to work into a schedule of automated scans of all your web properties.

Deque also offers a mobile accessibility review where our experts will analyze your app for accessibility problems and offer solutions to better take advantage of the accessibility features in mobile operating systems. Together, we provide the most comprehensive set of resources to support the need for accessibility in the world of mobile.

Contact Deque to Learn More

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