

CASE STUDY: USING 508 COMPLIANCE MANDATES FOR THE STANDARDIZATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT ARTIFACTS



SITUATION

The Violence Against Women Act of 2005 and the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 requires the Attorney General to ensure Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies have access to Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) systems. However, most of the 500+ federally-recognized Tribes across the United States don't have adequate access to national crime information databases.

"Section 508 mandates all electronic federal government artifacts be accessible to those with disabilities, per the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The implementation of this nondiscriminatory law drives consistency and standardization for software, documentation, and websites, as well as other internal and external government artifacts. In supporting internal operations and external beneficiaries for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), 508 compliance cannot be overlooked. Edwards Performance Solutions (Edwards) determined CMS' Office of Information Technology (OIT) needed to establish a practice to confirm no obstacles precluded interaction with or access to artifacts on the CMS SharePoint site for those with disabilities. When documents are correctly categorized, labelled, tagged, titled, and formatted using standardized conventions; every team member has equal access to information.



SOLUTION

After determining non-compliant artifacts, new file naming conventions – eliminating underscores – were pursued for all CMS SharePoint documents. Edwards created an 'Authoring and Evaluation Guide,' or cheat sheet, to meet CMS and Health and Human Services business requirements. This cheat sheet allows users to easily create and tag documents using 508 standards. Following stringent quality assurance practices, Edwards also leveraged the JAWS (Job Access with Speech) screen reader tool – certifying blind and visually impaired users can easily access documents using its text to speech output.

Contractor team members were made aware of 508 requirements via knowledge management sessions, ensuring consistent document and content management processes (i.e., accurately posting and labelling artifacts on CMS SharePoint sites). Edwards worked with CMS to create content rich SharePoint based storage



Edwards brought their team of content SMEs and instructional systems designers to partner with our PMU team in the CMS Office of Information Technology. The Edwards team worked to gather requirements, pilot course prototypes for our review, and quickly made adjustments based on our feedback. This allowed us to expand our reach to improve training opportunities for regional offices and full-time telework employees, increase course schedule flexibility, and allocate training resources to support mission critical programs.



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SOLUTION | CONTINUED

with proper template and artifact categorization; making document libraries readily available based on 508 principles and standards.

In addition to document accessibility, web-based content/applications necessitate supplemental development and distribution requirements. As a developer of eLearning courseware, Edwards followed and implemented Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Standard web-based compliance includes voice recordings, searchable text, textual description of images, and integration with keyboard shortcuts; however, CMS also mandates specific guidelines regarding browser availability and operating system constraints. Per Edwards' endorsement, CMS also requires independent desktop accessibility testing to verify section 508 adherence before courseware is distributed agency-wide.

RESULTS



RECYCLABLE ACCESSIBLE FORMAT TEMPLATES were generated to decrease the level of effort in creating accessible electronic content in the



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT sessions advocated authoring tools and cheat sheets, empowering users to effortlessly craft accessible formatted documents.



WCAG DROVE EDWARDS' WEB-BASED TECHNICAL APPROACH, development tools, and courseware functionality to support accessibility.



EDWARDS ALSO UPGRADED CMS' EXISTING TOOLS (e.g., Microsoft Office or Adobe Acrobat) to the latest version