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ENHANCING CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS: THE IMPERATIVE OF ACCESSIBILITY

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IN TODAY'S DIGITAL AGE, EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION IS CRUCIAL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS.

HOWEVER, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO RECOGNIZE THAT NOT ALL CUSTOMERS HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THESE COMMUNICATIONS. ACCESSIBILITY IN CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS ENSURES THAT EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR PHYSICAL ABILITIES OR IMPAIRMENTS, CAN EASILY ACCESS AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY AN ORGANIZATION.

THIS WHITEPAPER EXPLORES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY IN CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS AND PROVIDES ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS ON HOW COMPANIES CAN MAKE THEIR INTERACTIONS MORE INCLUSIVE.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY IN CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

Legal Compliance:

Many countries have implemented laws and regulations mandating accessibility in customer communications. The U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the UK's Equality Act 2010, the European Accessibility Act (2019), and the global Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) all provide clear guidelines for digital accessibility. Non-compliance can result in costly legal actions and damage to a company's reputation.

Expanding Customer Base:

Ensuring that your customer communications are accessible to everyone opens the door to a wider audience. More than 15% of the global population lives with some form of disability, representing a significant market segment. By accommodating these potential customers, you can tap into valuable opportunities that might otherwise be missed.

Brand Reputation:

A commitment to accessibility reflects your organization's values and dedication to inclusivity. Customers appreciate businesses that prioritize social responsibility, leading to positive word-of-mouth and an enhanced brand reputation.

Improved Customer Experience:

Accessible communications improve the overall customer experience. When individuals with disabilities can easily understand your products or services, contact customer support, and make informed decisions, it leads to increased loyalty and satisfaction.

Reduced Call Center Dependency:

Improving the accessibility of customer communications can reduce the volume of inquiries to call centers, as customers can more easily understand your correspondence. This, in turn, helps control costs and improves efficiency.

WAYS TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY IN CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

Accessible Digital Platforms:

Ensure that your website, mobile apps, and other digital platforms comply with accessibility standards like WCAG. Features such as alt text for images, keyboard navigation, and proper heading structures are essential for making digital content accessible.

Accessible Documents:

Provide important documents, such as product manuals and invoices, in accessible formats like properly tagged PDFs. Consider offering these documents in multiple formats to meet diverse needs.

Clear and Plain Language:

Use plain and straightforward language in your communications, avoiding jargon and complex terminology. This approach benefits not only those with disabilities but also non-native speakers and individuals with lower literacy levels.

Multiple Communication Channels:

Offer various channels for customer inquiries and support, such as phone, email, chat, and social media. Ensure that each channel is accessible and that support agents are trained to assist customers with disabilities.

Captioning and Transcripts:

For video and audio content, provide accurate captions and transcripts. This not only assists individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing but also benefits all users in noisy or quiet environments.

Assistive Technologies:

Test your digital platforms with screen readers and other assistive technologies to ensure compatibility and ease of use. Regularly update your software to address any accessibility issues that arise.

Feedback and Testing:

Encourage feedback from customers with disabilities and conduct regular accessibility testing to identify and resolve issues promptly. Continuous improvement is key to maintaining effective accessibility.

THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

Diverse Customer Needs:

Customers have varying communication preferences and requirements. Some may need braille documents, sign language interpretation, or accessible digital formats. Meeting these diverse needs can be complex and challenging.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance:

Ensuring compliance with accessibility regulations across different jurisdictions can be a daunting task. It requires a deep understanding of the relevant laws and continuous effort to stay up to date.

Technology Barriers:

Some customers face technology barriers when accessing digital communications, such as incompatible screen readers or inaccessible websites. Organizations may also struggle with legacy systems that are difficult to adapt to accessibility standards.

Cost and Resource Constraints:

Implementing accessible communication methods can require significant financial and human resources. Smaller organizations may find it challenging to allocate the necessary resources to address accessibility needs effectively.

Content Complexity and Legacy Systems:

Organizations dealing with complex technical content may find it difficult to make this information accessible without compromising accuracy. Legacy systems can further complicate this process, as they may not be easily adaptable to modern accessibility standards.

Language and Cultural Barriers:

Accessibility should extend beyond physical and sensory disabilities to include language and cultural differences. Providing information in multiple languages and considering cultural sensitivities adds another layer of complexity.

Consistency in Communication:

Maintaining consistency in accessible communication across various channels — whether it's a website, email, social media, phone, or in-person interaction — can be logistically challenging. This is especially true when visual elements like pictures or graphs need to be described to visually impaired individuals.

Testing and Feedback:

Regular testing and obtaining feedback from individuals with disabilities are crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of your accessible communication methods. This requires ongoing effort and collaboration with accessibility experts.

Privacy and Security:

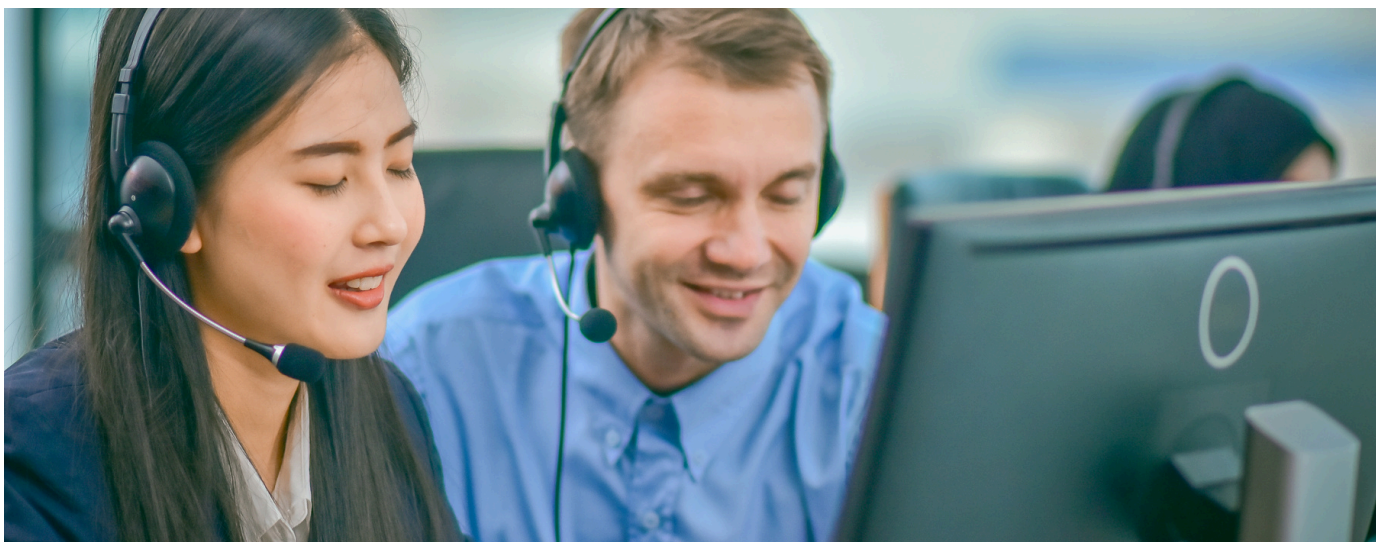
Ensuring that accessible communication methods also protect sensitive customer data can be a complex task, especially when dealing with personal or financial information.

Vendor and Supplier Compliance:

Organizations often rely on third-party vendors for various communication services. Ensuring that these partners meet accessibility standards can be challenging and requires thorough vetting and ongoing monitoring.

Scalability:

As organizations grow, scaling accessible communication methods to accommodate a larger and more diverse customer base becomes increasingly important. With a growing global population, the number of customers requiring accessible information will continue to rise.



HOW WE CAN HELP: ACHIEVING ACCESSIBILITY EXCELLENCE WITH SEFAS'S OMNI-CHANNEL SOLUTIONS

Accessibility in customer communications is not just a legal obligation—it's a moral and business imperative. Organizations that prioritize accessibility demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity, positioning themselves to serve a broader customer base.

By making your digital platforms, documents, and communication channels accessible, you enhance the overall customer experience and build a positive brand reputation. In an increasingly interconnected and diverse world, accessibility ensures that your business stays competitive by serving all customers equitably.



ABOUT SEFAS

Sefas, a Messagepoint company, helps organisations produce personalised, omni-channel customer communications that enhance customer experiences. From document composition to production management and digital delivery, SEFAS solutions enable organisations manage customer communications across print and digital channels. **Visit us at www.sefas.com to learn more.**

Messagepoint is a leading provider of customer communications management software. Only Messagepoint harnesses AI-powered Content Intelligence to automate and simplify the process of migrating, optimizing, authoring and managing complex customer communications for non-technical (business) users. Customers rely on its award-winning platform to consistently deliver exceptional, highly personalized customer communications across all platforms and channels. **For more information, visit www.messagepoint.com.**