



University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Consortium for Global Electronic Commerce  
*"Helping Industry Gain Competitive Advantage Through E-Commerce and E-Business"*  
www.cgec.org

## Project Report:

# American Family Insurance Website Accessibility Study

## Project Sponsor:

American Family Insurance

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## Authors:

Robyn Anderson  
Kristin Myers  
Tomohiro Noda  
Latita Pratt





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## **Executive Summary**

With new computer technology constantly arising to make the lives of individuals with disabilities easier and more independent, an increasing opportunity exists for them to buy and sell products or services, find information, and communicate with associates via the Internet. The visually impaired, who used to wait months or years for the information they needed to be made available in Braille or audiotape, can now access the news stories, magazine articles, government reports, and information on consumer products at the very same time it becomes available to the sighted population. While such opportunities present great promise for the disabled, associated problems include both the need for web application designers to consider guidelines specific to their development to ensure the accessibility of their work and also the high cost associated with assistive technologies developed for the disabled.

In order to address the issue of accessibility in the industrial setting, it is important to understand the many issues related to accessibility including the different types of disabilities, the presence of disability in the United States as a significant percentage of the population (approximately 20%), the increasing percentage of people over the age of 55 (as a percentage of the population) and associated increase in disabled individuals over time, and the laws to protect the disabled.

With applications serving customers, insurance agents, and employees within the company, American Family Insurance has realized the importance of accessibility and has taken significant steps to achieve high standards in application development in the realm of accessibility. The review of the current situation for accessibility implementation at American Family Insurance revealed certain opportunities for the company to enhance their application development to address accessibility in a more effective and efficient manner. These opportunities included the company’s ability to standardize the use of accessibility tools for testing applications in development; and the use of accessibility courses available at the company to educate IS associates.

After the company’s current situation was analyzed, the team developed four main objectives for American Family Insurance:

- Cultivate an awareness of accessibility and resources supporting accessibility among software engineers.
- Increase the percentage of accessibility implementation in the application development stage.
- Maintain consistency of accessibility throughout an entire web application.
- Make the process of implementing accessibility into a simple systematic task.

Along with the objectives listed above, the team also proposed implementation techniques to achieve each goal including:

- Introduce a new role for accessibility (Accessibility QA)
- Designate accessibility experts
- Develop a simplified common set of guidelines and checklists specific to each development technology (i.e. Java, HTML, PDF)
- Provide mandatory educational opportunities for AQA and software developers on accessibility

A detailed discussion of assistive technologies for web accessibility and an accessibility implementation strategy are discussed in this report.

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