Drupal and Section 508 Compliance   DATA SHEET

Designing websites for accessibility and Section 508 compliance can be a daunting task, especially when using outdated, highly customized web content platforms. The flexibility of Open source Drupal enables site builders to easily assemble sites that will help meet these requirements as well as scale to meet future needs.

What web designers should expect

Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act includes legislation that mandates Federal websites be accessible by disabled persons as compared to those available to non-disabled persons. The onus is on each Federal agency to adhere to the intent of Section 508, however there is no one implementation or officially recognized certification that applies to all agencies. Developers should adapt their proposals specific to the designated agency's website accessibility practices.

Using Drupal to comply with Section 508

An increasing number of government websites have adopted Drupal because it helps government agencies to maintain openness, transparency and visibility. Notable examples include whitehouse.gov and sba.gov. Drupal offers unparalleled flexibility and freedom, and because there are no technical limitations for Section 508 compliance Drupal is a natural choice for designing accessible websites.

Drupal provides designers with complete control over the presentation layer.

Designers can create their own custom themes or access pre-built themes and sub-themes through the Drupal community. Similarly, community-contributed modules can be used to customize website functionality. And unlike proprietary software, designers have access to source code to allow them the flexibility and freedom they need.

Government Agencies that have embraced Drupal

- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Vetrans Affairs
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Special Courts
- District Courts
- House of Representatives
- Learn more at http://drupalshowcase.com

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Taking the next step

For more information, designers can refer to the "Accessibility 11 Point Checklist" found on the Drupal.org website (http://drupal.org/node/465106/) for tips on building Section 508-compliant websites. Some notable best practices include: provide alternative text, do not rely on color alone to convey meaning, make sure content is clearly written and easy to read, and more. The checklist includes tips for implementing these best practices along with additional resources for creating Drupal themes.

Many existing Drupal themes already meet Section 508 compliance guidelines and can help designers get started with building accessible websites with the flexibility that allows for growth. Themes, modules, translations and installation profiles, can all be found on drupal.org.

More about Acquia

Acquia enables government agencies and enterprises to manage their growth and scale their online properties with confidence. Acquia's services, cloud infrastructure, and support enable companies to realize the full power of Drupal while minimizing risk. Customers including Twitter, Al Jazeera, Turner, Intuit, World Economic Forum, Stanford University, New York Senate and NPR have launched and maintain their high performance Drupal sites with Acquia. Visit our website or contact us at 888-922-7842 to learn more about Acquia's solutions for Drupal.

Further Information on Drupal and Section 508 Compliance

- 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, http://www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards_index.htm/

- Accessibility and Drupal, http://drupal.org/node/394094/

- ADA 508 Resources for Web Developers, http://ada508.com/

- Association of Assisted Technology Act Programs, http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/technology/Oklahoma508.html/ (state-level legislation modeled after Section 508)

- Drupal Accessibility Statement, http://drupal.org/about/accessibility/

- Resources for Understanding and Implementing Section 508, http://www.section508.gov/

- Section 508 Homepage: Electronic and Information Technology, http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm/

- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, http://www.w3.org/WAI/

- Web Standards Project Accessibility Task Force, http://www.webstandards.org/action/atf/