

2023 ACCESSIBLE UX DESIGN TRENDS

With more and more brands beginning to see accessible web design as not just a nice-to-have, but more of a strategic imperative, it's no surprise that we're quickly moving toward a more accessible web. According to WebAIM's annual report, the number of detected accessibility errors across one million home pages decreased by 1.1% over the last year – a promising statistic as home page complexity is also increasing significantly. With accessible design being the new industry-wide standard, what are some considerations your business should keep in mind as we head into 2023?



1. Look Beyond the Overlay

Aiming to improve the accessibility of a website, overlays allow users to change things like color contrast and font size, and sometimes go a step further using JavaScript to make front-end changes to the site. They quickly rose in popularity with the promise that, with this quick plug-in tool that detects accessibility issues, your website would be “repaired” in real-time. Sound too good to be true? That’s because unfortunately in a lot of cases, it is. Sometimes these overlays end up [causing more issues that they prevent](#).

Unfortunately, automated testing through [overlays often only detects about 20-30 percent of accessibility issues](#), leaving the majority of these errors undetected and posing legal risks to your organization. In fact, in 2021, more than [200 overlay customers were sued for lack of accessibility](#) on their website. Also, though many of the widget-based overlays that make changes directly on the webpages seem great, often they have a largely overstated practical value. For small page changes like color contrast, generally the end users that these features serve already have built-in modifications on their devices to accommodate them.

The solution? Address accessibility issues at their core. Unfortunately, there isn't a quick fix or a shortcut for digital accessibility, but businesses who put in the time and effort to ensure their website is [WCAG compliant](#) will reap the benefits.



2. Leverage the Power of Voice Search Optimization

With over [62% of Americans leveraging voice assistance on their devices](#), voice search is something that many users benefit from daily. But for some end users, it can really take your site's accessibility to the next level. End users who might have limitations that restrict them from using a keyboard and mouse, as well as users with cognitive impairments, may prefer to use voice search to more quickly and easily find what they're looking for on your site.

The rise in popularity of voice assistance seems to show no signs of slowing down in terms of its power and reach, so much so that in October of 2022, Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, Microsoft, and other non-profit partners [joined together to improve speech recognition capabilities](#) to make them even more inclusive for users with disabilities and diverse speech patterns. Ensuring your brand's site is optimized for voice recognition is a clear win for all users.



3. Are we done with custom scrolling yet?

While parallax scrolling grew in popularity in the mid 2010s, [many now feel that what initially was exciting and innovative](#) can now come across as nauseating, confusing, and over the top – and notoriously challenging when it comes to accessibility. While users overwhelmingly appreciate good design, brands must balance that with creating experiences that allow people to quickly find what they're looking for in an accessible and user-friendly way.

More often than not, parallax scrolling isn't accessibility friendly and can create a lot of hurdles for individuals with disabilities. This type of custom scrolling is rarely fully keyboard accessible, and it often doesn't translate well to mobile, making it a trend that we think should be left behind as we move into 2023. The best user experiences are those where all users can quickly find the information they need, and often less is more.



Next Steps

If you're looking to reevaluate your [brand's digital approach](#) to incorporate more accessible design, Clarkston can help. We pair our comprehensive digital assessment methodology with our many years of [digital experience](#) to partner with you every step of the way.

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