

Is Your Social Media Content Accessible to Everyone?

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Inclusivity is a hot topic in the world we live in (as it should be). Companies have been making a concerted effort to include wider audiences within their content, but many don't realize that many people are still being left out of the conversation. For example, the deaf or hard of hearing community, the blind community, and those that deal with color blindness or vision issues struggle with accessibility on social media daily. At the end of the day, social media marketing aims to reach as many people as possible, and taking these steps can help you achieve that goal. Here are some ways you can make your message more available (and inclusive) to your followers.

Alternative Text (Alt Text)

Posting a photo of a new product on social media can really help make a sale but what happens if a follower is visually impaired? Adding alternative text (or alt text) can help people who use screen reading technology to visualize images through a written description. Adding custom alt text to images posted on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter ensures that those using screen readers can truly depict the full message you're trying to convey. When adding alt text, always remember to be as descriptive as possible. For example, let's say you are posting an image of new women's sandals to your company's Facebook page. What alt text could you provide to help someone who can't see the product decide if they want to purchase it?

No Alt Text: When no alt text is added, screen readers will simply read "image" to their user.

Poor Alt Text: "Tan Sandals." Although this is an accurate portrayal of what the

product is, it doesn't go into enough detail about it. Your follower didn't gain any new information about the product from this Alt Text.

Good Alt Text: "These Spring sandals come in Tan and Black and feature an open toe, an ankle strap, a one and a half-inch heel, and a soft cork footbed." This text provides details about the features of the product, the available colors, and the time of year that the reader could use them in. Without seeing the photo your reader could determine if this style of shoe suits them based on the description.

Video Captions

Adding captions to videos is something that can help a wide variety of people like the hearing-impaired community, non-native speakers, and social media users who have their sound turned off. Studies show that 85% of 30-second videos on Facebook are viewed without sound. Captions improve the user experience by allowing all users to enjoy video content in any environment. Social media users can be found checking their social channels in restaurants, Ubers, gyms, airports, and anywhere else that has WiFi. Making your content more easily digestible by adding captions is a high-value effort that can yield a lot of benefits. Captioning your videos may not only include an audience that is often left out of video content but it could also draw more people to your content overall.

Hashtags

Because there are no spaces between words in hashtags, screen readers can't always tell that there are multiple words present (#shoeretailingtoday). This often results in screen readers



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trying to read hashtags as one long word. By capitalizing each new word in your hashtag (sometimes called Camel



Case) you are helping people that use screen readers or those who have dyslexia read the hashtag as intended (#ShoeRetailingToday).

Color

Creating graphics that stand out on social media is important, but are you making sure that everyone can read them? For people who are colorblind, color contrast is key. When making graphics, avoid red/green or blue/yellow combinations as they can be challenging to differentiate. Text that is laid over images can also create a challenge for people with vision issues. Try adding a solid or opaque background behind your text before you lay it over an image.

Make the Effort

Making the effort to be more inclusive is the first step. There are many tools available online to help make this an easier process, such as readability tools, captioning services, and contrast checkers. Adding these extra steps may seem tedious at first, but overall, making your content more inclusive only widens your audience in the long run. ■

Want to learn more about what you can do to be inclusive with your social media content? Contact Allison Zalesny, Social Media Associate, at allison@rytechllc.com.