



Unlocking Potential:

The Power of Accessibility in Digital Transformation

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About

This paper explores the impact of digital transformation on accessibility and examines into the opportunities and challenges faced by digital leaders in creating inclusive digital environments.

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Executive Summary

This white paper explores the pivotal relationship between accessibility and digital transformation - revealing how, by focusing on accessibility, it can promote innovation and organisational growth.

In today's dynamic workplaces, where one in four individuals faces a hidden barrier to success due to disability, accessibility is not just a moral imperative: it is a strategic business necessity to create a workplace where every team member can fully contribute to its success, unhindered by unnecessary barriers.

Through real-life stories, we uncover the profound impact of inaccessible tools and information on productivity, morale, and engagement and how these challenges can be overcome. Beyond legal compliance, we highlight the economic and social implications, illustrating how embracing accessibility is not just about meeting standards—it is about seizing untapped opportunities and gaining a competitive edge in today's market.

At NHS England, a focused emphasis on accessibility yielded significant results. By streamlining their reasonable adjustments process, they empowered over 1,000 colleagues, ensuring they had the tools to excel. This led to increased productivity and satisfaction, while collaborative efforts with landlords enhanced office environments for inclusivity. Improvements to onboarding processes resulted in fewer complaints and greater staff satisfaction, showcasing a commitment to a diverse and thriving workplace.

Join us on a journey through the challenges and triumphs of integrating accessibility into digital transformation initiatives and discover actionable strategies to make accessibility a cornerstone of your organisation's digital transformation. By prioritising accessibility, organisations can enhance user experiences, attract top talent, and pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future.

Don't miss out on the transformative potential of accessibility in the digital age, read on and unlock the power of inclusivity in your organisation today.

Introduction

The foundation of any organisation lies within its workforce, representing a tapestry of diversity and inclusion. Startling statistics reveal that in the UK, approximately 1 in 4 individuals contend with long-term illness, impairment, or disability¹, with many encountering temporary disabilities as well. Disability encompasses a spectrum of conditions or impairments that impede daily activities, covering physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health challenges². Legal definitions, such as those outlined in the Equality Act 2010, highlight the enduring impact of impairments. Within our ranks, colleagues with disabilities not only bring invaluable perspectives but also play a significant role in shaping a workforce that mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve.

Historically, there has been a noticeable gap between the employment rates of disabled and non-disabled individuals. Understanding and addressing this disparity is not only a matter of legal compliance³ but a strategic imperative. The business case for hiring individuals with disabilities has become increasingly compelling, with companies leading in disability inclusion experiencing significant financial benefits. Research from Accenture and Disability:IN⁴ indicates companies prioritising disability inclusion have experienced significant financial gains, including higher revenue, net income, and economic profit compared to their peers over the past five years. Additionally, leaders in disability inclusion demonstrate 25 percent higher productivity than industry averages. This evidence highlights the tangible advantages of fostering an inclusive workplace culture.

Colleagues with disabilities bring a unique and valuable perspective that enhances our organisational fabric, fostering innovation and creativity. Additionally, the recent surge in the number of people with disabilities in the workforce, particularly since the onset of the pandemic, highlights the importance of creating accessible and inclusive work environments. Despite these benefits, there remains a gap in employees fully disclosing their disabilities at work, indicating the need for organisations to prioritise awareness and advocacy efforts. Recognising and meeting the legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments is just the starting point; it is an investment in creating an inclusive culture where every individual can contribute meaningfully to our shared goals.

Recognising the inability of individuals with disabilities to access and use digital

¹ [ONS 2023](#)

² [Equality Act 2010](#)

³ [Equality Act 2010](#)

⁴ [Accenture and Disability:IN](#)

tools not only hinders their professional productivity but also restricts their overall participation in societal and economic activities. This exclusionary effect has direct financial implications for businesses, as they miss out on valuable contributions and diverse perspectives.

Advancements in technology have empowered individuals with long-term conditions in healthcare, offering solutions like digital transcription tools and personal devices such as iPads to manage their health effectively. In buildings and software, accessibility features have ushered in a new era of inclusivity, ensuring that individuals of all abilities can navigate and engage seamlessly with various environments and applications. These examples demonstrate the real impact that technology can have in bridging accessibility gaps, enhancing overall productivity, and fostering a more inclusive and diverse workplace.

In the ever-evolving landscape of technological advancements, a new imperative is emerging: the call for accessibility. Much like the urgency surrounding climate change, accessibility in the digital realm is becoming a defining challenge of our time. As passionate digital leaders, we find ourselves at the intersection of technology and responsibility, with a profound duty to ensure that our digital landscapes are inclusive and considerate of every individual, regardless of their abilities.

Just as sustainability has taken centre stage in organisational discourse, accessibility is poised to be the next critical frontier. The profound impact of technology on our daily lives demands that we not only modernise but do so with a commitment to inclusivity. Digital technology, whilst a powerful tool for efficiency and innovation, must now be wielded with an understanding that its potential can only be fully realised when it is accessible to all.

The parallels between the environmental impact of technology and the need for accessibility are striking. In much the same way that organisations are setting sustainability-focused targets, the call for accessibility is growing louder. The trend of integrating accessibility metrics into organisational goals mirrors the trajectory of sustainability, signalling a shift toward a more conscientious digital landscape.

This white paper aims to guide you through the intricate terrain of accessibility in the digital realm. Whilst we may not have all the answers, our goal is to empower you with practical insights, shedding light on why accessibility is not only imperative for the well-being of individuals but also a catalyst for meaningful digital transformation.

Definitions

Before we discuss further, we need to define a few terms to ensure that we have a mutual understanding.

Disability

Disability refers to a diverse range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health impairments that may impact an individual's ability to engage in everyday activities. It encompasses conditions that are visible as well as those that are invisible or hidden. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature. Legal definitions often emphasise the long-term effects of impairments on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities⁵.

Accessibility

Accessibility in the digital context goes beyond mere compliance with standards; it encompasses the design and implementation of digital products and services that empower people of all abilities⁶. For example, it may be necessary to substantially increase a font size to enable it to be read by an employee with impaired vision, ensuring that technology becomes a tool for empowerment, fully enabling everyone to take part in the digital experience.

Just as sustainability is guided by frameworks such as the Triple Bottom Line, accessibility, too, follows established principles. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)⁷ serve as a crucial framework, providing a comprehensive set of guidelines for making digital content accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities. Additionally, the Universal Design⁸ principles emphasise the creation of products and environments that are usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities. A holistic approach to accessibility considers not only the technical aspects outlined in WCAG and Universal Design principles but also the human dimension.

Digital leaders must recognise that the term "accessibility" transcends compliance checkboxes; it embodies a commitment to making technology a force for positive change, ensuring that no one is left behind in digital evolution.

⁵ [Equality Act 2010](#)

⁶ [Global Digital Accessibility: The Importance of Inclusive Design in a Connected World](#)

⁷ [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines: Conformance Resources | WCAG](#)

⁸ [The 7 Principles - Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#)

Digital transformation

Digital transformation initiatives have been taking place for many years and the term itself has evolved along the way. Within an organisational context, we define digital transformation as the process of implementing the changes required to enable the effective usage of digital technology to be more efficient and productive in a modern workplace⁹. We believe that digital transformation goes beyond the implementation of specific technologies; it is about delivering a shift in mindset to a digital-first approach, together with an underpinning operating model, to enable the organisation to leverage digital technology more effectively.

Accessible digital transformation

Accessible digital transformation has its roots in recognising the critical need for inclusivity and improved user experiences. Fuelled by a commitment to breaking down barriers and ensuring equal access for all individuals, this transformative process is a response to the evolving landscape of technology. As society increasingly values inclusivity, accessible digital transformation emerges as a proactive approach to making digital services universally usable and beneficial, regardless of individual abilities or disabilities. It is not about merely adding accessibility features but embracing a mindset where accessibility leads the way in digital transformation.

This transformative shift echoes the evolution of cybersecurity, once optional, now fundamental to organisational strategy. Similarly, accessibility must shed its secondary role and take centre stage in digital transformation. Our aspiration is for accessibility to weave into the very fabric of digital evolution, shaping a future where conscientious organisations instinctively prioritise inclusivity in their digital realms.

Some food for thought...inclusivity is an integral component, especially in the wider sense of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). There is a reciprocal learning opportunity between the accessibility and EDI agendas¹⁰. By adopting an accessibility-first mindset, organisations should aim to craft digital environments that empower every individual, regardless of abilities, thereby contributing to the broader vision of an inclusive and equitable digital future. This approach transcends mere compliance with standards; it is about creating a digital landscape where everyone, irrespective of their background, identity, or abilities, can thrive and

⁹ [What is digital transformation? | McKinsey](#)

¹⁰ [Equality, diversity and inclusion in the Workplace | Factsheets | CIPD](#)

contribute. The principles inherent in the EDI agenda can inform and enrich the accessibility perspective, fostering a holistic approach that embraces diversity in all its dimensions, ensuring that digital spaces truly reflect the values of inclusivity and equity.

Why should we care?

"Accessibility in technology is not just a feature; it is a reflection of our commitment to equality. As we design digital spaces that welcome everyone, we are not only unlocking potential but also building a more inclusive and compassionate future where technology becomes a bridge, not a barrier."

Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web

This insight serves as a poignant reminder in the digital realm, emphasising that change is not just a necessity but an opportunity for innovation. In this section, we explore the crucial reasons why digital leaders, especially, should deeply care about integrating accessibility into their digital initiatives.

Real People

In the realm of accessibility, it is vital to acknowledge that every policy, initiative, or technological advancement has a profound impact on real individuals. These are not just abstract concepts or legal obligations; they represent pathways to empowerment, inclusion, and tangible improvements in people's lives. The stories of individuals navigating challenges and triumphs within our organisation serve as poignant reminders of the profound impact accessibility initiatives have on real people. From empowering productivity to navigating workplace inclusivity and overcoming information barriers, these case studies offer compelling narratives that highlight the importance of prioritising accessibility. Examining the experiences of individuals like Miz, Fateha, and Daisy in the case studies below, we gain invaluable insights into the transformative power of accessibility and the importance of nurturing environments where every individual, regardless of ability, can flourish. These stories not only highlight the human impact of accessibility initiatives but also emphasise the significant return on investment (ROI) they can generate for organisations.

Case Study 1: Empowering Productivity - Miz's Dyslexia Journey

Miz's story exemplifies the transformative impact of accessibility initiatives within an organisation. As a dedicated employee, Miz silently grappled with dyslexia-related challenges, inhibiting his ability to read and manage documents effectively. Prompted by an awareness campaign, Miz received Dragon software tailored for dyslexic individuals, addressing his unique needs. This software alleviated Miz's reading challenges, enabling him to manage documents efficiently. Miz's journey highlights the importance of creating an environment where seeking support is embraced. It emphasises the transformative impact of accessibility initiatives,

fostering a culture of understanding and support among employees. Additionally, the organisation witnessed a ROI through Miz's increased productivity and job satisfaction.

Case Study 2: Navigating Workplace Inclusivity – Fateha’s Challenge

Fateha's experience sheds light on the evolving challenges faced by employees with disabilities in a post-COVID workplace. As a wheelchair user, Fateha struggled to maintain support in the flexible work environment. The organisation's initial response highlighted shortcomings in accessibility, leading to Fateha feeling stuck and isolated. Recognising the inadequacy, a buddying scheme was initiated to support individuals like Fateha, bridging the gap between remote and in-office colleagues. Whilst addressing immediate concerns, the organisation committed to continuous improvement, engaging with individuals to refine support mechanisms. Fateha's journey highlights the organisational commitment to addressing accessibility challenges and fostering inclusivity. Furthermore, the implementation of proactive accessibility measures resulted in a tangible ROI, promoting a positive work environment and enhancing overall employee satisfaction.

Case Study 3: Overcoming Information Barriers - Daisy's Perspective

Daisy's experience during organisational reorganisation sheds light on the intersection of accessibility and communication strategies. As a Dragon user, Daisy faced challenges accessing vital information amidst organisational changes. The organisation's oversight in accessibility testing left Daisy unable to access crucial updates, highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach to communication. Daisy's feedback prompted the organisation to ensure information dissemination platforms consider the diverse needs of all employees. Learning from Daisy's experience, the organisation committed to investing in accessibility testing and inclusive communication strategies. Daisy's journey highlights the importance of investing in accessibility testing and fostering an inclusive communication strategy within organisations. Additionally, the ROI of accessibility investments was evident in the optimisation of communication channels and the creation of a more inclusive workplace culture.

Drivers

Social Inclusivity

Accessibility is not just a trend but a Movement gaining momentum across industries. This presents a significant opportunity for organisations to lead the way as trailblazers. Accessibility goes beyond technical specifications; it epitomises a dedication to advancing social inclusivity. In a global landscape that treasures diversity, organisations placing accessibility at the forefront actively dismantle

barriers for individuals with disabilities. This is not just about meeting a checklist; it is about participating in a broader movement that recognises the importance of creating digital spaces where everyone can fully engage.

Approaching digital design with social responsibility not only cultivates a sense of belonging and inclusion but also positively shapes an organisation's reputation and public perception¹¹. Digital leaders, in this context, wield considerable influence in crafting a digital environment that not only embraces diversity but ensures equitable participation for all.

By being at the forefront of the Accessibility Movement, Leaders can set standards, inspire others, and contribute to a digital future that truly reflects the principles of inclusivity and social responsibility.

Employee Engagement

Just as societal expectations shape user preferences, they also influence the expectations of the workforce. A workplace committed to accessibility sends a strong signal to employees about the organisation's values. KPMG's study reveals a growing desire among employees for their organisations to demonstrate a commitment to accessibility and inclusivity.¹²

PwC also exemplifies this commitment by actively integrating digital accessibility into its Global Disability Inclusion strategy. This emphasis on inclusion, empowerment, and thriving for individuals with disabilities is part of ongoing efforts to make foundational changes and enhance accessibility across the organisation's network.

“Thanks to advances in assistive technology, I’m not only able to have a career with a great firm, but also an opportunity to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of technology at the firm.”

Samrawit Biyazin, Senior Associate, Business Services, PwC US¹³.

By fostering an inclusive workplace culture, PwC aligns with the evolving expectations of the workforce. Through global internal events celebrating Global Accessibility Awareness Day, PwC aims to not only foster awareness and inclusion but also enhance employee engagement. This dual commitment positions PwC as a leader in shaping a workplace culture that resonates with both societal and workforce expectations¹⁴. For digital leaders, fostering a workplace culture that values accessibility becomes integral to attracting, keeping, and engaging top

¹¹ [Infusing Digital Responsibility into Your Organization \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org)

¹² [KPMG 2023](#)

¹³ [PwC: Our Journey towards digital accessibility](#)

¹⁴ [Our journey towards Digital Accessibility: PwC](#)

talent.

Innovation and Creativity

Accessibility is not just a compliance checkbox; it is a catalyst for innovation. Through embracing accessibility, individuals and teams are challenged to think creatively, leading to the development of solutions that benefit all users. The pursuit of accessible design often results in innovations that transcend accessibility requirements, creating digital experiences that are intuitive, efficient, and groundbreaking¹⁵.

Legal Mandates

Accessibility is not only a best practice; it is a legal imperative rooted in the commitment to creating an inclusive digital landscape. In the UK, the government established accessibility standards to ensure that digital products and services cater to a diverse audience. These standards go beyond recommendations; they are enshrined in legal requirements. Compliance is not only about avoiding penalties; it is a necessity to align with UK law and contribute to the development of a fair and inclusive digital environment.

In a stark real-life example, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) faced significant legal and reputational repercussions due to discrimination against its disabled employees. Between 2016 and 2019, the DWP lost 17 out of 134 discrimination claims, resulting in over £950,000 in tribunal payments and settlements. This highlights the importance of prioritising accessibility and inclusivity in the workplace to avoid legal penalties and protect organisational reputation¹⁶.

The legal framework includes key regulations, such as the Equality Act 2010 which mandates organisations to ensure accessibility. Additionally, adherence to WCAG and the accessibility requirements for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) products and services, outlined by the Department for Work and Pensions¹⁷ forms a crucial part of this legal mandate. These regulations apply universally, highlighting the importance of integrating accessibility into digital offerings to meet legal obligations and contribute to an equitable digital future.

In the public sector, the UK Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 mandates public sector digital interfaces must be

¹⁵ [Accessible design means better design \(mckinsey.com\)](https://www.mckinsey.com)

¹⁶ [DWP says it is 'shocked' by its own disability tribunal record - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55888888)

¹⁷ [DWP - Accessibility Requirements](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684842/dwp-accessibility-requirements.pdf)

perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust¹⁸. Similarly, the Web Accessibility Directive¹⁹ compels all public sector bodies in the EU to ensure accessibility in their online interfaces. These regulations are not merely about compliance; they are about creating an inclusive online experience for everyone.

The UK government's National Disability Strategy reinforces the commitment to improving disabled people's lives, removing barriers in public and civic life, including digital accessibility²⁰. Legislative changes, recognition, and support for disabled candidates are integral components of this strategy. An example of this includes imposing a statutory duty on Great British Railways to enhance accessibility. These legal mandates collectively emphasise the importance of digital accessibility and highlight the legal obligations that drive positive change, highlighting the need for organisations to ensure an inclusive digital experience for all.

Economic

“Accessibility is not just a feature; it's our culture. When you design products and services with inclusivity in mind, you're not just doing the right thing for people with disabilities, you're creating better products and experiences for everyone. Inclusivity is not just a moral imperative; it's a business imperative.”

Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft.

Beyond ethical and legal considerations, accessibility yields a significant economic impact. Research conducted by Gartner reveals that incorporating accessible design can amplify the market reach of a product or service by 20%²¹, tapping into a more extensive customer base. Viewed as an investment, accessibility yields substantial returns, unlocking doors to novel business prospects and propelling revenue growth.

Tesco made accessibility a priority on Tesco.com from inception, collaborating with the RNIB in 2001 to enhance the home grocery service for visually challenged customers. Through an accessible alternative site, tested by over 70 visually impaired individuals, Tesco saw remarkable results: a significant increase in online sales revenue from £52 million in 2000 to £235 million in 2001. Similarly, Microsoft's commitment to accessibility, exemplified by innovations like the Xbox Adaptive Controller and features such as Sticky Keys and Seeing AI, earned it the respect of the disabled community, showcasing the business benefits of prioritising accessibility²².

¹⁸ [DWP - Accessibility Manual](#)

¹⁹ [EC-Web Accessibility Directive](#)

²⁰ [GOV UK - National Disability Strategy](#)

²¹ [Gartner - Market Guide for Digital Accessibility](#)

²² [6 companies that boosted business with accessibility - Scope for business](#)

In the UK, where the expansive disability market is referred to as the Purple Pound, individuals with disabilities and their families contribute a noteworthy £249 billion annually²³. According to a Forrester Research Economic Impact Study commissioned by Microsoft, integrating accessibility into existing and ongoing development cycles not only enhances inclusivity but also contributes to cost savings²⁴. Furthermore, as the digital landscape faces increased scrutiny for ethical practices, accessibility emerges as a strategic differentiator, influencing consumer choices and fostering brand trust.

Caring about accessibility is not just a matter of compliance; it is a strategic imperative driven by legal mandates, market demands, corporate responsibility, innovation, and employee engagement. Digital leaders must recognise the transformative power of accessibility, not only as a legal necessity but as a cornerstone for building digital environments that are inclusive, innovative, and resilient in the face of evolving user expectations.

Value for Money

Importantly, this commitment to inclusion extends beyond legal compliance. From a financial perspective, creating an inclusive workplace represents value for money and offers a compelling return on investment. Studies consistently show that diverse and inclusive organisations outperform their peers, both in terms of innovation and financial results. Investing in the well-being and productivity of our diverse workforce directly contributes to our overall organisational success.

Furthermore, the impact of doing nothing cannot be underestimated. Failing to prioritise accessibility and inclusivity risks stifling innovation, hindering employee morale, and potentially leading to legal challenges. The cost of inaction goes beyond immediate financial considerations; it affects our reputation, talent acquisition, and overall organisational effectiveness.

In conclusion, this commitment to accessibility is not just a legal requirement; it is a strategic decision that aligns with our values, contributes to our financial success, and safeguards our organisation against the detrimental effects of inaction. By investing in a diverse and inclusive workplace, we position ourselves for sustained success and resilience in an ever-evolving landscape.

Whilst emphasising the importance of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, it is crucial to underscore the broader implications of our commitment. Beyond the intrinsic value of promoting a supportive environment for all, our initiatives directly

²³ [WC3 - The Business Case for Digital Accessibility](#)

²⁴ [Forrester Research](#)

align with considerations of value for money, return on investment, and the impact of inaction.

Value for Money:

Investing in accessibility and inclusivity initiatives is a strategic allocation of resources, demonstrating a commitment to long-term success. By prioritising these initiatives, organisations can expect improved employee satisfaction, higher retention rates, and increased productivity, all of which contribute to organisational success.

Return on Investment (ROI):

Fostering an inclusive workplace offers substantial returns on investment, encompassing various dimensions such as enhanced employee engagement, greater innovation, and improved collaboration. However, the true impact of inclusivity initiatives may not be fully realised without considering the entire employee lifecycle, from recruitment to onboarding and ongoing support.

When employees lack the necessary tools or accommodations to perform their roles effectively, the costs can be significant. From decreased productivity to increased turnover rates, the expense of not providing appropriate support can outweigh the initial investment in accessibility measures. For example, a simple accommodation such as providing a laptop with accessibility features can significantly enhance the productivity and job satisfaction of an employee with specific needs, thereby yielding greater returns in the long run.

By considering the holistic impact of inclusivity initiatives throughout the employee lifecycle, organisations can better understand the true ROI of accessibility investments. From recruitment and onboarding to ongoing support, prioritising inclusivity not only enhances employee satisfaction and engagement but also drives tangible business outcomes, ultimately contributing to the overall success of organisations.

Impact of Doing Nothing:

Neglecting to prioritise accessibility and inclusivity can lead to significant negative consequences. A disengaged workforce, potential legal ramifications, and damage to the organisation's reputation are among the risks associated with inaction. Clearly articulating these potential consequences highlights the importance of proactively addressing accessibility and inclusivity concerns.

By addressing these aspects, we not only fulfil our legal obligations and ethical responsibilities but also strategically position ourselves for sustained success. Investing in inclusivity is an investment in the overall health and prosperity of our organisation, contributing to both its present and future well-being.

Technological

"Technology is most powerful when it empowers everyone. Accessibility is at the heart of everything we do at Apple because we believe that technology should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities."

Tim Cook, CEO, Apple

Whilst digital technology has revolutionised various industries, its role in enhancing accessibility has become a pivotal focus in recent times. Traditionally, technology has primarily been used for efficiency and insights, but a change in thinking is occurring, emphasising the importance of making digital technology itself more accessible.

In the dynamic landscape of digital accessibility, several UK businesses are leading the charge to create more inclusive technologies. Companies like Microsoft are at the forefront of providing accessible solutions. Microsoft's commitment to accessibility is evident in its inclusive design practices, product features, and assistive technologies, making digital experiences more accessible for individuals with diverse abilities²⁵.

Furthermore, the UK Business Disability Forum plays a crucial role in advocating for accessibility and inclusivity in the business sector²⁶. As a network of businesses, the forum offers valuable resources, best practices, and a platform for collaboration to ensure that businesses prioritise accessibility in their operations. Another noteworthy contributor is AbilityNet a UK-based nonprofit organisation dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities through accessible technology²⁷. They provide expert advice, assessments, and training to empower individuals and organisations to embrace digital accessibility.

There are many examples of accessibility tools making a significant difference to business operations for example in healthcare we have seen the integration of dictation tools in health consultations. This innovative approach not only enhances the accessibility of healthcare information but also facilitates more inclusive and effective communication between healthcare professionals and patients. These initiatives collectively highlight the transformative power of technology in fostering accessibility and inclusivity across various domains.

These specialised organisations exemplify the growing recognition of the pivotal role technology plays in ensuring accessibility. By fostering awareness, providing

²⁵ [Microsoft - Raising the Bar on Accessibility](#)

²⁶ [Business Disability Forum](#)

²⁷ [Ability.net](#)

resources, and advocating for inclusive design practices, they contribute to a cultural shift in the technology industry towards creating digital solutions that are not only innovative but also accessible to individuals with diverse needs.

Just as the industry has evolved to prioritise efficiency and insights through digital technology, accessibility is now taking centre stage. These initiatives highlight the commitment of the technology sector to ensuring that digital solutions are universally accessible to individuals with varying abilities.

Market Demands

The digital landscape is highly competitive, and user expectations are evolving. Accessibility is no longer an optional feature; it is a significant factor influencing user preferences. Organisations that prioritise accessibility send a powerful message to their user base: a message of inclusivity, user-centricity, and social responsibility²⁸. Meeting the accessibility needs of diverse user groups can enhance user satisfaction, loyalty, and overall market competitiveness.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

In a world where CSR is a defining characteristic of successful organisations, accessibility plays a pivotal role. Demonstrating a commitment to accessibility aligns with broader corporate responsibility initiatives. Organisations that prioritise accessibility contribute to building a more inclusive society, fostering positive relationships with stakeholders, and upholding ethical practices in the digital realm.

In their commitment to CSR, both KPMG and PwC prioritise digital accessibility as an ethical imperative. They demonstrate this commitment through initiatives such as promoting digital literacy, supporting accessible technology, and enhancing the usability of online resources. By advocating for industry standards and best practices, they not only fulfil their ethical obligations but also contribute to building a more inclusive society and fostering positive relationships with stakeholders²⁹.

Challenges

Whilst the importance of accessibility in digital transformation is evident, various challenges must be addressed to ensure that digital environments are truly inclusive.

²⁸ [Preparing for the European Accessibility Act-2025](#)

²⁹ [Digital Marketing Institute](#)

Measuring Inclusivity

Accurately measuring inclusivity poses a significant challenge in the realm of digital transformation, particularly given the dynamic and diverse nature of user experiences. Whilst organisations often focus on designing for specific accessibility standards, measuring the broader impact on inclusivity, especially in the context of varied user needs and assistive technologies, is a complex task.

Even for tech giants such as Apple, which consistently emphasises accessibility features in its products, evaluating the comprehensive impact on users with diverse abilities remains intricate. Inclusivity metrics extend beyond adherence to standards; they encompass user satisfaction, efficient task completion, and the overall user experience for individuals with different abilities.

Furthermore, the landscape of assistive technologies and user needs evolves rapidly, requiring ongoing monitoring and adaptation of digital interfaces to ensure they remain inclusive. The challenge lies not only in meeting existing accessibility standards but also in staying ahead of emerging technologies and evolving user expectations.

User Experience Variability

Ensuring a consistently positive user experience for individuals with diverse abilities is a formidable challenge. The digital landscape encompasses a wide spectrum of user needs, from visual impairments to motor skill challenges, and each user requires a tailored approach to digital interactions. The insights from our case studies shed light on some of these challenges; Miz's dyslexia journey illuminates the transformative impact of customisation, with him expressing, "using personalized digital tools really helped me get more done and feel happier at work. Fateha, navigating post-COVID changes, shares, "Digital platforms need to include everyone. My challenges emphasise the importance of designing for all. It's a shared responsibility" These genuine perspectives underscore the nuanced challenges and stress the essential role of personalised digital interactions in fostering inclusivity. Achieving a balance between customisation for specific needs and maintaining a cohesive, user-friendly interface for all users is a delicate challenge that digital leaders must navigate.

Legacy System Compatibility

Many organisations struggle with the challenge of integrating accessibility features

into legacy systems. As digital transformation often involves building upon existing infrastructure, ensuring compatibility with outdated systems poses a hurdle. Retrofitting accessibility into legacy systems requires meticulous planning and execution, as well as a strategic approach to gradually transition towards more inclusive digital environments.

Continuous Adaptation to Standards

Accessibility standards and guidelines evolve over time to address emerging technologies and better accommodate user needs. Staying abreast of these changes and continuously adapting digital interfaces to align with the latest standards is an ongoing challenge. Digital leaders need to establish mechanisms for regular audits and updates to ensure that their digital transformations remain at the forefront of inclusivity.

Whilst the push for accessibility in digital transformation is robust, overcoming the challenges of accurate measurement, user experience variability, legacy system compatibility, and continuous adaptation to standards is crucial for creating digital environments that truly prioritise and embrace inclusivity.

Changing behaviours

“The central issue is never strategy, structure, culture, or systems. The core of the matter is always about changing the behaviour of people.”

John P. Kotter

Digital leaders recognise the inherent challenge in altering people's behaviours. Initiating change is a complex task that extends beyond strategy, structure, culture, or systems. According to James Belasco, an insightful figure in organisational change, **“Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.”**³⁰ For digital leaders, the difficulty lies not only in conceptualising and implementing change initiatives but, more crucially, in understanding and addressing the impact on the individuals who constitute the organisation. Sustainable organisational change hinges on cultivating a critical mass of individuals who not only understand the change but also believe in it and actively engage in transformative behaviours.

The rapid pace of change, especially in the digital landscape, introduces uncertainty

³⁰ [PDCA Cycle for a Change Leader](#)

that can make individuals hesitant or even obstructively resistant to change. This challenge is further magnified by the pervasive influence of accessibility, which shapes every facet of an organisation's digital technology. Even for organisations with a robust digital-first mindset and a mature operating model, the far-reaching impact of accessibility necessitates significant levels of behavioural change.

As digital leaders navigate the landscape of change, understanding and influencing the collective behaviour of individuals becomes paramount. Success lies not only in the formulation of strategic initiatives but in the ability to inspire, guide, and support individuals through the transformative journey. This demands a nuanced approach that acknowledges the human dimension of change and empowers individuals to embrace and drive the evolution of digital practices that prioritise accessibility within the organisation.

The demand for digital leaders to address accessibility is increasing, presenting challenges akin to those they already encounter. In the following section, we will examine practical steps you can undertake to prepare and expedite your journey toward accessible digital transformation.

How to approach it?

“If you can’t describe what you are doing as a process, you don’t know what you are doing.”

W. Edwards Deming

In the ever-evolving realm of digital accessibility, where inclusivity takes centre stage, organisational commitment takes form in Figure 1.

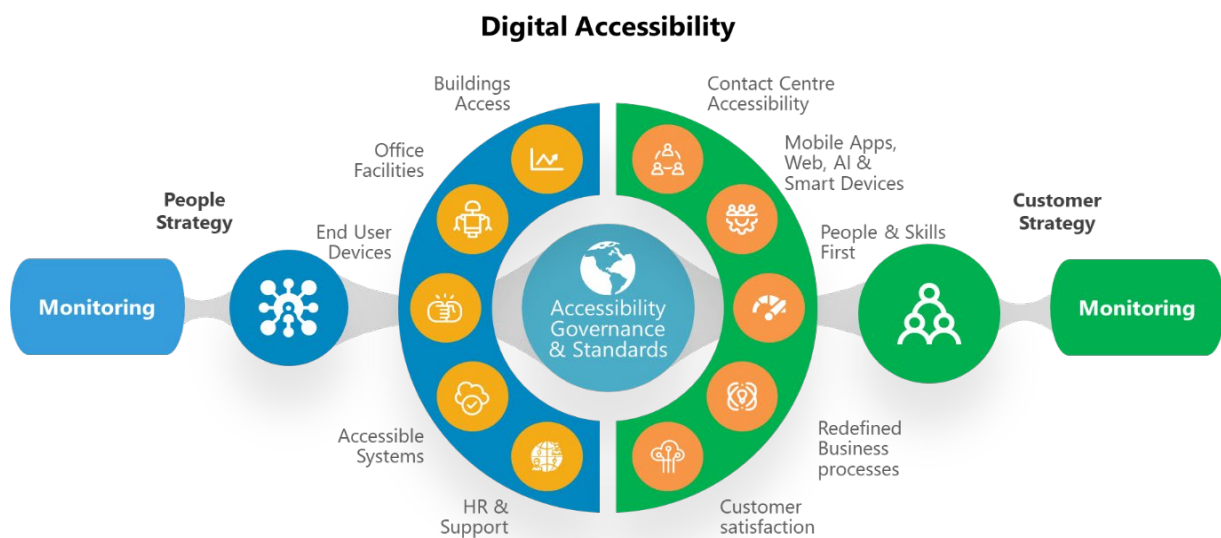


Figure 1 – FSP’s Digital Accessibility Framework

This visual representation illustrates the comprehensive approach required to guarantee accessibility not only for our customers but also for our most invaluable resource—our workforce. Delineated into two strategic pillars, namely Customer Strategy and People Strategy, this diagram lays bare an unwavering commitment to shaping digital interactions that go beyond limitations, fostering inclusivity and celebrating diversity.

Customer Strategy: On one side, our Customer Strategy unfolds, encapsulating our initiatives to make every interaction seamless and inclusive for our diverse customer base. From the accessibility of contact centres to the user-friendliness of mobile apps, websites, and smart devices, we must prioritise the satisfaction of our customers by redefining business processes with accessibility at the core. Through an overarching focus on people and skills, we aim to empower both our customers and our staff with accessible digital solutions.

People Strategy: Simultaneously, our People Strategy emerges on the other side, emphasising a commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace. Beginning with accessible buildings and office facilities, we extend our dedication to providing end-user devices and implementing internal systems that cater to the diverse abilities of our staff. This strategy extends beyond technology, integrating accessibility into our human resources practices to ensure that every member of our team is supported and valued.

Together, these strategies form the backbone of our digital accessibility framework, reflecting our core values. As you explore each facet of this framework, you will see our commitment to accessibility, ensuring that both customers and staff navigate a digital landscape that is truly inclusive for everyone.

As we navigate the intricacies of digital accessibility, it becomes evident that its integration into digital transformation is not a radical departure but rather a nuanced progression. Our approach is rooted in the belief that accessibility should be seamlessly woven into the fabric of each evolving digital capability, nurturing an accessibility-first mindset. Building on the insights shared in the Definitions section, we recognise that any transformative endeavour, accessibility included, is intricately linked with an organisation's operating model and its people. Consequently, a holistic examination of the capabilities typically addressed in digital transformation initiatives becomes imperative, presenting an opportunity to refine and elevate these capabilities to prioritise accessibility at every turn.

How to maintain it?

In the quest for prioritising accessibility in digital transformation, it becomes imperative to lay the foundation for a robust framework that steers the progression of digital capabilities. The Digital Accessibility Maturity Model (DAMM) is a framework that helps organisations assess their digital accessibility maturity and provides guidance on how to improve it³¹. Figure 2 presents a reference model in harmony with the principles of the DAMM. Although not every capability may universally apply to all organisations, this model acts as a valuable guide for evaluating the existing state of accessibility within digital capabilities at each level, from Ad-hoc to Exemplary.

Accessibility Maturity Model

A framework to address and evaluate inclusion issues, providing a clear guide on what good looks like.

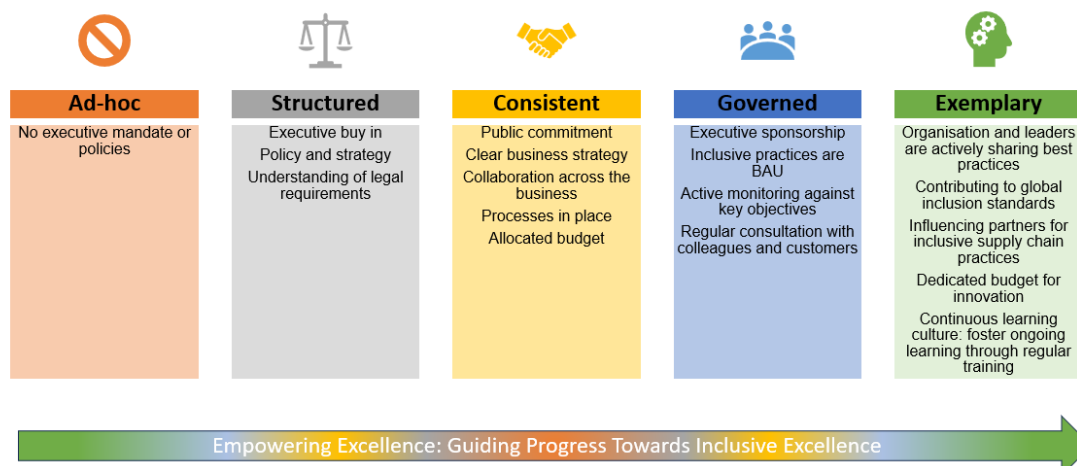


Figure 2 – FSP’s Accessibility Maturity Model: what good looks like!

Like any organisational strategy, an accessibility-focused digital transformation strategy should seamlessly align with the core purpose of your organisation, encapsulating its unique value proposition. The value created by your organisation should inherently drive positive, inclusive impact, with digital assets growing in tandem with organisational growth.

³¹ [DAMM](#)

Digital capabilities, acting as levers, become instrumental in effectively managing and leveraging these assets, propelling the transformation programme forward. The specific configuration and delivery of these capabilities are intricately defined by your organisation's operating model.

As digital leaders, calibration of digital transformation strategies involves a nuanced consideration of the maturity of existing digital capabilities and technologies (the current state), aligning them with organisational priorities and anticipating the natural evolution of technology (the target state). In the context of accessibility, the maturity assessment extends beyond functionality to consider the impact on inclusivity, ensuring that digital services cater to diverse user needs.

The key questions integral to an accessibility maturity assessment include:

- **What is our current level of digital accessibility maturity?** The DAMM framework provides a set of criteria to evaluate the organisation's current level of digital accessibility maturity. This evaluation can help identify areas that need improvement and prioritise actions.
- **What are the benefits of improving our digital accessibility maturity?** Improving digital accessibility can help organisations reach a wider audience, improve user experience, and avoid legal risks.
- **What are the best practices for improving digital accessibility?** The DAMM framework provides guidance on best practices for improving digital accessibility. These best practices include developing a digital accessibility policy, providing training to staff, and conducting regular accessibility testing.
- **What are the costs associated with improving digital accessibility?** Enhancing digital accessibility may necessitate investments in staff training, technology, and third-party services. Organisations may need to evaluate the costs and benefits of improving digital accessibility against the risks and costs associated with not doing so.
- **How can we measure the effectiveness of our digital accessibility efforts?** The DAMM framework provides a set of metrics to measure the effectiveness of digital accessibility efforts. These metrics can help organisations track progress and identify areas that need further improvement.

It is also important to consider:

- **What standards are you adhering to in reporting accessibility data?** Ensuring alignment with established standards when reporting accessibility data, will help provide a transparent and uniform framework.
- **What is your plan for enhancing accessibility in each digital capability?** Developing a comprehensive plan to systematically improve accessibility within each digital capability will help foster an inclusive and user-friendly environment.
- **Are your teams equipped with the necessary skills to implement and track accessibility measures?** By equipping teams with the requisite skills to proficiently implement and continually track accessibility measures, you will grow expertise in the workforce.
- **Are your teams empowered and incentivised to prioritise accessibility in the capabilities they are responsible for?** Empowering teams to prioritise accessibility through effective business change will cultivate a collaborative culture where accessibility is integral to daily operations.

Organisations with advanced maturity in accessibility practices can readily address these questions. However, for organisations at an earlier stage of maturity, these questions may pose challenges.

Digital leaders in less mature organisations are encouraged to prioritise the accessibility enablers depicted in Figure 2. These enablers not only assist in answering critical questions but also provide practical steps to enhance organisational accessibility. Whilst every capability contributes to accessibility, the enablers offer significant opportunities for transformative change, cutting across various capabilities to ensure a holistic and inclusive digital transformation.

Enterprise Governance

In this section, we explore the critical elements of enterprise governance within the context of accessibility. Supplier management, data analytics, and enterprise architecture are key components that shape our approach to accessibility initiatives. These aspects ensure that our strategies are well-informed, efficiently executed, and fully aligned with our commitment to creating inclusive digital experiences.

Supplier management

Robust supplier management is pivotal in assessing and mitigating an organisation's impact on inclusivity. Suppliers, particularly those providing technology solutions, significantly contribute to the accessibility of digital products and services. However, not all suppliers may provide detailed accessibility information, requiring digital leaders to establish a comprehensive Supplier Management capability.

In the realm of accessibility, evolving legislation, such as the UK's Business Disability Forum's guidelines, highlights the importance of transparent reporting on the inclusivity features of products and services³². As more standards emerge, including those focused on digital accessibility, the need for transparent supplier practices becomes increasingly vital.

Digital leaders should be vigilant against misleading claims from suppliers, such as assertions of accessibility features without corresponding evidence or a comprehensive accessibility plan. Procurement processes should prioritise suppliers that not only claim accessibility but also provide tangible evidence of their commitment, including ongoing improvements and adherence to accessibility standards.

By strategically leveraging their purchasing influence, digital leaders can encourage suppliers to prioritise and invest in accessibility measures, fostering a collaborative approach that ensures the inclusivity of digital products and services throughout the supply chain. This approach aligns with evolving accessibility standards and enhances the overall inclusivity of an organisation's digital offerings.

Data analytics

³² [UK Business Disability Forum](#)

In the context of advancing Digital Accessibility, Maturity Assessments play a crucial role in evaluating baseline services and enhancing the inclusivity of an organisation's digital products and services. Analysing accessibility data demands more than just scrutinising numbers³³; it requires:

- Access to advanced tools tailored for accessibility analysis.
- Expertise in accessibility principles and methodologies.
- A deep understanding of the significance of accessibility at a leadership level.

Collaboration between digital leaders is essential to ensure that digital systems are designed with Accessibility at the forefront. Public sector websites and mobile apps must be accessible to all users, as the individuals who need them the most often find them the hardest to use.

Standards such as the Accessible Tech standards and WCAG provide guidelines to ensure that technology, infrastructure, and systems are accessible and inclusive for all users. Compliance with these standards is not just a legal requirement but a moral obligation.

Despite the abundance of mature data analytics services and platforms, there remains a shortage of offerings specifically tailored for accessibility or inclusive design-related data. It is crucial for organisations to monitor developments in tools like the Accessibility Analytics Manager, which integrates a common, vendor-agnostic data model for accessibility data.

This approach to data analytics aligns closely with the People Strategy facet of the Digital Accessibility framework, emphasising the importance of fostering an inclusive workplace culture. By integrating accessibility considerations into data analytics processes, organisations can ensure that their digital products and services meet the diverse needs of all users.

Effective collaboration with digital leaders is essential to identify, gather, manage, and analyse raw accessibility data efficiently to meet reporting needs and drive continuous improvement.

To successfully ensure the appropriate Digital Accessibility services are addressed, organisations should refer to the DAMM, which guides them through a comprehensive approach. This approach is depicted in Figure 1: FSP's Different Facets of Digital Accessibility Framework. This visual representation lays out the organisation's commitment to fostering inclusivity and celebrating diversity,

³³ [W3 Accessibility Maturity Model](#)

presented into two strategic pillars: Customer Strategy and People Strategy.

Enterprise architecture

Enterprise architecture (EA) is pivotal in aligning an organisation's business objectives with its technological infrastructure, ensuring accessibility is seamlessly woven into both current and legacy systems. To address the critical question of how to ensure accessibility across all digital technology, a robust EA capability becomes indispensable. It should furnish insights into the accessibility status of existing technologies, providing a detailed inventory of their roles in supporting inclusive practices, and a strategic roadmap for enhancing accessibility.

In navigating the landscape of larger organisations, where the technology footprint is substantial and diverse, a strategic approach is necessary to ensure accessibility is seamlessly integrated. The effective EA capability is key to managing portfolios of accessible technologies, understanding their impact on accessibility, and making informed decisions on whether to fix or maintain current and legacy systems.

Establishing a well-functioning EA capability tailored to accessibility is essential for orchestrating the gradual evolution of an organisation's technology portfolio in sync with its commitment to inclusivity. The capability should provide a comprehensive view of the organisation's accessibility landscape, outlining current accessible technologies, addressing legacy systems, and charting a roadmap for implementation. This strategic guidance ensures that accessibility is not just a standalone initiative but an integral part of the organisation's digital transformation journey, where inclusivity is considered from the ground up.

Change management

To foster a universal accessibility mindset within your organisation, instigating a change in people's behaviours becomes crucial. Change management, in the context of accessibility, is a systematic approach aimed at helping individuals comprehend the need for accessibility changes, the reasons behind these changes, and how their behaviours can contribute to creating an inclusive environment. The objective is to integrate accessibility seamlessly into people's decision-making processes, making it a natural and integral aspect of their actions.

Much like sustainability, accessibility aligns with the overarching goals of digital transformation initiatives, encompassing the adoption of new technologies, forging inclusive partnerships, and enhancing efficiency through data analysis. Accessibility, when ingrained in the organisation's culture, provides a higher purpose and acts as an additional incentive for individuals. Studies show that when people are genuinely invested in change, it is 30% more likely to be enduring³⁴. Most individuals aspire to live and work in environments that prioritise accessibility and inclusivity.

Establishing a change management capability tailored to accessibility enables digital leaders to systematically drive behavioural changes within their organisations. This approach not only aligns with organisational objectives but also resonates with people's personal values and aspirations, creating a culture where accessibility is not merely a compliance requirement but an integral part of the organisational DNA.

³⁴ [McKinsey - Changing Change Management](#)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey towards accessible digital transformation stands as a pivotal chapter in the evolution of organisational strategies. Accessibility, an indispensable facet of our digital landscape, is not only a moral obligation but a strategic necessity for organisations committed to embracing an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

As organisations venture into the uncharted territory of digital transformation, prioritising accessibility is a foundational step. The path to an accessible digital transformation requires strategic actions and collective commitment. Here are some key actions that organisation leaders should consider, mirroring the essence of DAMM.

- **Accessibility Framework**
 - Establish an Accessibility Architecture capability aligned with DAMM principles.
 - Assess your current and legacy systems, determining whether improvements or replacement are needed to enhance accessibility.
- **Engage with Suppliers**
 - Encourage open dialogues with suppliers, emphasising the importance of accessibility in products and services.
 - Prioritise suppliers who actively support and contribute to accessibility initiatives.
- **People First Approach**
 - Prioritise change management initiatives, using methodologies like PROSCI to systematically drive behavioural changes towards an accessibility-first mindset.
 - Celebrate achievements in accessibility, recognising and reinforcing positive behaviours and outcomes.
- **Data Analysis**
 - Leverage data analytics to gain insights into user experiences, ensuring digital interfaces cater to diverse needs seamlessly.
 - Regularly analyse accessibility data to identify areas for improvement and track progress over time.
- **Celebrate Achievements**
 - Recognise and celebrate milestones in accessibility, creating a positive and inclusive culture within the organisation.
 - Share success stories internally and externally to inspire others and highlight the commitment to accessibility.
- **External Advocacy and Championing**
 - Designate an Accessibility Champion or team to advocate externally and participate in industry forums, conferences, and partnerships.

- Collaborate with organisations like the UK's Business Disability Forum and forge partnerships to expand accessibility efforts beyond your organisation.
- Support awareness campaigns to strengthen commitment and motivate others.

Embarking on this journey towards accessibility is not just a responsibility but an opportunity to reshape the digital landscape for the better, where organisations can weave accessibility into the fabric of their digital initiatives, fostering an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

Despite the challenges, a commitment to digital accessibility offers significant business opportunities. It improves user experience, broadens customer reach, enhances reputation, fosters employee satisfaction and taps into a growing market for accessible products and services - a strategic move to align business goals with societal impact.

In conclusion, while accessibility is vital for compliance; it is also about embracing a transformative mindset - commitment in this area is instrumental in shaping a digital landscape where everyone can thrive.

Hopefully, this white paper has offered insights into the challenges and opportunities that accessibility presents for digital transformation agendas, alongside ideas and inspiration for addressing these issues, emphasising the need for long-term, strategic thinking and action.

Thank you for reading, and we welcome your comments, suggestions, or enquiries.

If you would like us to see how we can help your organisation to realise the benefits of a cohesive accessibility programme, please feel free to reach out to us at accessibility@fsp.co

About FSP

Founded in 2012, FSP Consulting Services (FSP) are a leading digital transformation and Cyber Security specialist. We are working with a broad range of public and private sector organisations to help them accelerate the opportunities created through digital transformation. As a long-standing Microsoft Solutions Partner, our portfolio of modern workplace, cloud, data, and cyber security offerings, alongside trusted managed services delivery, is driving change for high-profile clients across a range of sectors. We are also proud to be a Best Companies™ 'World Class' workplace.

Find out more about FSP here: www.fsp.co

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Fiona is a Principal Consultant at FSP and an experienced digital transformation leader. She has over 20 years' achievement in change management and six years of experience of driving accessibility initiatives in healthcare and has been a catalyst for accessibility initiatives in healthcare, highlighting her ability to bridge the gap between technology and business transformation.

Fiona's strength lies in her unique talent for navigating the intersection of technology and business dynamics. Her role as a digital transformation leader is defined by a passion for driving meaningful change, not only in terms of technology adoption but also in enhancing organisational effectiveness. Fiona excels in leveraging technology to empower people and organisations, particularly in the realm of literacy as she truly understands the transformative power of technology in making both individuals and organisations more effective.

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Paul is the Chief Technology Officer at FSP and an experienced technology leader working at the forefront of digital transformation and cyber security. He has over 20 years' experience of helping organisations build digital capabilities across public, private and defence sectors. He has a background in software engineering and a passion for using technology as a force for good.

Paul has designed and built systems using a wide range of technologies over his career, including implementing one of the world's largest learning platforms for children with special educational needs, and he is a passionate advocate of standards like Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to enable everyone to benefit from technology.

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