How CommonLook® Helped a Minnesota State Agency Deliver Document Accessibility for All

Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), one of several key agencies in the State, is responsible for producing the budget, economic forecast, and other vital data.

Overall, the State of Minnesota has a focus on increasing opportunities for people with disabilities and others underrepresented within the State of Minnesota's workforce. It strives to provide the public with excellent customer service.

Challenge

MMB made it a priority to comply with Section 508 and other legislation around document accessibility. In 2013, the organization was planning a web site rebuild and as part of that objective also made the decision to upgrade the accessibility of all existing documents on the current web site. All future documents were also to be made accessible.

The challenge was to identify and examine several thousand existing documents in a timely fashion. Their web-based documents ran the course from simple one-page PDF documents, to several hundred pages in length, with complex charts, tables and graphs.

In 2013, Tamara Sawyer joined MMB as Accessibility Coordinator in the Management Services Division. Among other responsibilities, she was asked to train staff on the production of accessible documents to meet Federal and State accessibility standards.

Solution

Ms. Sawyer and individuals in nine other Minnesota state agencies, were given CommonLook software to produce accessible PDF documents and forms. She was familiar with other accessibility software. "When I started I was working with PDF Version 10 and right after that we upgraded to PDF Version 11, Adobe Pro 11. I worked with Adobe Pro until we received CommonLook."

Minnesota Management and Budget

INDUSTRY

- Government

CHALLENGES

- Build internal capability to address PDF document accessibility, and comply with accessible legislation
- Accessible web site hinged on remediation of a large volume of existing documents
- Ensure new PDF documents are accessible
- Train staff in accessibility document software and practices

RESULTS

- CommonLook software and training boosted speed and efficiency of document accessibility team.
- Thousands of PDFs were converted, contributing to a fully accessible Agency web site
- "Train the trainer" education raised document testing and remediation knowledge and skills
- Compliance with accessibility regulation was achieved and maintained

Her relationship with CommonLook started with training. "We had a CommonLook person come out and he trained the initial ten people." Ms. Sawyer remembers the early days in MMB's major document accessibility project. "We went through thousands of documents. We immediately checked to see if they were accessible. About one third of them if not more needed anywhere from minor to major accessibility work."

Ms. Sawyer described her working relationship with CommonLook support personnel. "They are great. No complaints. I've dealt with both Support at CommonLook.com and directly with Paul Rayius, (the Training Manager). They are easy people with whom to work. There were five or six of us that got together and he did an entire webinar for us just on forms and it was great!"

Results

Today, all of the documents on the Minnesota Management and Budget web site are accessible. Tamara Sawyer has become a mentor to other colleagues holding the same responsibilities. "We've opened up our training to other agencies recently to try and help them out."

Recently, her Agency purchased additional CommonLook software licenses. Ms. Sawyer points to some specific things she likes about CommonLook software. "The speed at which I can remediate a document. I can generate multi level lists in

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>
> **Tamara Sawyer, Accessibility Coordinator**
> Minnesota Management and Budget

CommonLook that Adobe Pro just can't do. This ability to work with tables and lists is important. In one case, the time to remediate the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report went from one month to under a week."

Tallying the Benefits

- Developed an effective internal accessible PDF document capability and capacity.
- Multiple agency teams learned software and remediation process through CommonLook training.
- Solid progress on compliance with Section 508 and universal document accessibility.
- Time and human resource effort to remediate complex documents has been drastically reduced.

CommonLook

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