TAFE SWSi

TAFE SWSi Utilizes HiSoftware Solutions to Solve Out-of-the-Box Accessibility Issues in SharePoint® and on the Web

Quick Facts

Organization

- As an award-winning vocational education and training provider, TAFE NSW – South Western Sydney Institute (TAFE SWSi) provides quality education to one of the fastest growing and most dynamic regions in Australia, New South Wales.

Industry

- Higher Education

Challenges

- TAFE SWSi ICT Services Unit was challenged with how to ensure accessibility across all public and internal websites, intranets, collaboration and e-Learning tools to comply with Australia's WCAG 2.0 mandate.

Solution

- HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff® and the Accessibility Foundation Module™ (AFM)

Benefits

- Ensures all Internet content is compliant with government WCAG 2.0 mandate
- Identify and fix out-of-the-box SharePoint framework accessibility issues
- Reduces time to accessibility by avoiding lengthy process identifying all issues

Background

TAFE NSW is Australia's public vocational education and training (VET) provider and has an essential role to play in strengthening the skills base of the New South Wales (NSW) economy and supporting economic growth for its communities. Each Institute offers a broad range of courses and specialist services to meet the needs of its customers, industry partners and local community. Institutes play a strategic role in meeting state and national education priorities for vocational education and training. Institutes have also developed a strong global reputation through the delivery of educational services internationally and supporting international students studying vocational and English language courses in Australia.

TAFE NSW operates through its ten individual Institutes including SWSi. There are four metropolitan and six regional Institutes with over 130 campuses across NSW. Each Institute has its own website which provides specific information about its range of courses and services.
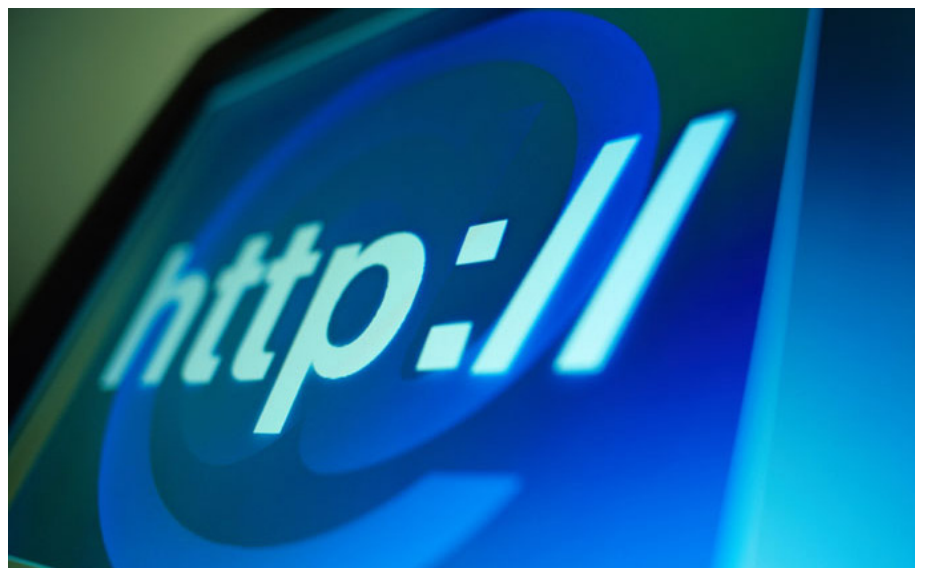
The Challenge

With ten Institutes, each with its own website, and 3,500 staff within SWSi, the TAFE SWSi ICT Services Unit was challenged with how to ensure accessibility across all public and internal websites, intranets, collaboration and e-Learning tools to comply with Australia's WCAG 2.0 mandate.1 TAFE SWSi uses a combination of SharePoint 2010 and Kentico as its content management systems (CMS) and ran into a few accessibility challenges.

First, creating accessible websites using Kentico proved challenging. Kentico tests for accessibility using a third party API, however TAFE SWSi found that the Kentico scans did not catch all of the accessibility issues, especially contrast and color ratios. Second,

the SharePoint 2010 framework itself was not accessible for disabled end users who needed to share and contribute content.

TAFE SWSi needed to make all its public facing websites and SharePoint platform compliant with the WCAG 2.0 AA mandate by December 31, 2014 – and the organization needed help.

Requirements

All Australian Government websites and other web-based content must comply with any relevant Mandatory Requirements identified in the Web Guide (http://webguide.gov.au/mandatory-requirements/). There are three main actions:

Any websites that are owned or operated by the Australian government need to conform to WCAG 2.0 level AA by the end of 2014. This requirement applies to all Web content—regardless of whether it is on the Internet or intranet. This requirement doesn't just apply to government-owned public-facing sites but also covers government employee-only sites, such as SharePoint sites.

In addition, Australian government agencies are required to provide accessible alternatives to all PDF documents.

Lastly, agencies are required to report on their progress in meeting WCAG 2.0 AA.

Shane Morgan, Web Systems, e-Learning & Database Coordinator, ICT Services Unit said, "We have a number of contributors to our Internet content and thousands of users trying to collaborate using SharePoint. We had to ensure that SharePoint itself was accessible for our staff and also that all our public facing websites are completely compliant with WCAG 2.0."

The organization required an automated solution to complement its existing manual accessibility testing to help reduce the lengthy process identifying and remediating all the accessibility issues across its Web assets and SharePoint framework. TAFE SWSi wanted a repeatable, auditable and enforceable process to meet the mandatory requirements.

Finding the Right Solution

Already aware of HiSoftware, TAFE SWSi evaluated and ultimately chose to implement HiSoftware

Compliance Sheriff as well as the Accessibility Foundation Module (AFM) to help them solve these two distinct challenges.

Addressing website accessibility in time to meet government deadlines

To tackle the first challenge, TAFE SWSi looked to the Compliance Sheriff solution which allows them to approach website accessibility using a repeatable and auditable process to not only discover accessibility issues, but maintain compliant sites moving forward.

Compliance Sheriff automates the monitoring and auditing of Web content, attached PDFs and Microsoft Office documents against WCAG 2.0 AA as per the government requirements. It also has the capability to test through to level AAA, other international guidelines (e.g. US Section 508), as well as custom requirements. It can be used to validate published content and documents on their existing websites, but can also test web content behind the firewall prior to publishing. TAFE SWSi has a number of units and users contributing content to its websites, so a robust tool that tested for all of the requirements covered under WCAG 2.0 AA was needed, as not all contributors are fully aware of the requirements and their existing solution was insufficient.

Using Compliance Sheriff, TAFE SWSi was able to identify accessibility issues right away including a major issue with contrast and color ratios that their previous solution did not find. Using the reports generated from Compliance Sheriff, the team at TAFE SWSi could focus on fixing the issues efficiently, rather than spending time trying to identify them in the first place.

Shane said, "We've been able to run reports using Compliance Sheriff to get a baseline on our accessibility. These reports are repeatable which means we can measure what's been rectified and identify reoccurring issues. We can use the reports for auditing, but more importantly to conduct training as necessary to improve our staff's awareness of accessibility."

"Another key benefit was for testing third party developed sites. We believed these sites were developed by the vendor with accessibility in mind, however the first scan with Compliance Sheriff

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Shane Morgan
Web Systems, e-Learning & Database Coordinator, ICT Services Unit

raised a whole heap of accessibility issues. We were able to identify and solve these issues before the sites went live and became a problem."

Making the SharePoint Environment Accessible

To solve the second challenge of how to make their SharePoint infrastructure accessible to disabled users, TAFE SWSi looked at the Compliance Sheriff Accessibility Foundation Module (AFM). AFM provides users with a set of tools to create an accessible platform / framework for a SharePoint 2010 or 2007 portal or intranet site. It is integrated into the Compliance Sheriff offering to provide a more complete and easy-to-deploy method of addressing SharePoint framework accessibility. The most significant advantage of AFM is the enterprise-friendly installation method that allows a SharePoint Server administrator to easily apply a master configuration to multiple SharePoint applications.

Shane said, "HiSoftware was the only enterprise level solution in the market that tests the SharePoint framework for accessibility. Our team of developers used Compliance Sheriff AFM to assess and apply the needed fixes to accessibility issues with the SharePoint framework. The issues included a lack of Alt text, the need to resize existing text, SearchBox, ListView adapter, among others. AFM helped us easily solve the challenges we faced with the items that made SharePoint inaccessible out-of-the-box."

"In fact we work with a consultant to manually test the accessibility of the SharePoint environment and he noted significant improvement of the site navigation, which was echoed by our disabled end users who are now able to easily use the SharePoint 2010 site."

Benefits of Automated Accessibility Testing for SharePoint and Websites

TAFE SWSi now has a powerful Web accessibility solution developed by a company with deep domain expertise to help them fully solve their compliance challenges. Not only does TAFE SWSi benefit from the ability to make its Web content accessible in time for the upcoming government deadline, but the organization can also ensure all future Web content is also in compliance. Additionally, TAFE SWSi now has an accessible SharePoint environment that can be fully utilized by all staff. This is not only important to comply with the mandates, but also allows TAFE SWSi to maximize their investment in SharePoint.

TAFE SWSi will continue to use Compliance Sheriff across SharePoint and Kentico and has plans in the future to use Compliance Sheriff on all of its Web platforms to check for accessibility health and compliance status.

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