Ai Squared has been developing magnification and reading software for the visually impaired for two decades. This technology has become increasingly important in terms of how an individual interacts with a website or an app. Proclaiming that they have “got accessibility covered,” the firm is well aware that many people are in denial about their ability to read content on a mobile device or computer screen.

With that in mind, the Vermont-based company has recently launched SiteCues, an intuitive SaaS tool that is intended to make reading content on a website easier for users and simplify the experience for those of a non-technical nature.

To put it simply, the software will remove the hurdles that people with low vision can face when trying to consume content on a device, and ultimately reduce the strain that web browsing can place on the eyes.

Challenges

However, studies have shown that 95% of people that could use assistive technology do not do so. This is a real world problem that the SiteCues development team attributes to the ever-increasing variety of devices and portals that are available. Testing within a lab environment can iron out bugs and identify areas to be addressed, but it is real world experience that forms a vital part of understanding how the average person will be able to use the software on a daily basis.

Among those that are considered to be visually impaired, the technical revolution has at times, provided them with barriers to inclusion. Take for example, the average website or mobile app. In numerous cases they have been developed with sight in mind and while device manufacturer’s include a zoom as standard, this is not always enough to aid those who struggle to see.
There is little doubt that an increased reliance on screen-based technology is having an effect on retinal ability. To put it bluntly, we now spend a staggering amount of time staring at words and pictures on a device. These words and pictures may not have been designed to cater to those who have trouble with reading or even comprehending what is there.

Luckily, there are companies who understand that assistive technology can break down the barriers of the one-size-fits-all philosophy that device manufacturers seem to cling to.

**Solution**

“In order for customers to test the latest code, we need some piece of software which we are able to inject into websites,” says Seth Holladay, a Quality Engineer at SiteCues. “The process of doing that is very, very complicated, and it can be time-consuming to set something like that up.”

With QA an integral part of providing those customers (which in this case are websites and not users) with a site feature that directly influences how an individual engages with the content on that page, the SiteCues team brought Applause into the equation. This decision was driven by an identified need to “completely change how we were testing from a technical perspective,” with the responsibility for this often falling onto one person.

The team had already identified that the majority of features offered were user-interface driven, but the challenge was to engineer situations that could access multiple customers sites in order to test the software itself. At the same time, SiteCues had to decide whether or not to hire full-time QA staff or take advantage of a managed testing service.

“The complexity from a testing perspective is that we’re across all browsers, as well as all operating systems in different types of computers, so we can’t test all the different configurations of what we’re doing with the engineering team that we have,” said Bradley Sauln, a sales engineer at the firm. “And then on top of that, it gets complicated because we would really like to be testing our development code as opposed to what is already out there in the world.”

**Results**

In his opinion, it was the diversity of options that Applause could offer that made it a “game changer.” With the need for testing across the software development cycle not limited to pre-launch deadlines, utilizing real time scenarios not only made the difference but also reduced the need for SiteCues to hire a full-time QA engineer. This instead gave the team access to a diverse, experienced and cost-effective
testing community.

“There’s nowhere else that you can get these kind of insights,” States Sauln. “We could hire an excellent QA engineer and we still wouldn’t get the kind of information that you get from having such a diverse group of people looking at your product. They’re all in different locations, using different devices.”

About Applause

Applause empowers companies of all sizes to deliver great digital experiences (DX) – across web, mobile and IoT as well as brick-and-mortar – spanning every customer touchpoint.

Applause delivers unmatched in-the-wild testing, user feedback and research solutions by utilizing its DX platform to manage communities around the world. This provides brands with the real-world insights they need to achieve omni-channel success across demographics, locations, devices and operating systems that match their user base.


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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framingham, MA 01701</td>
<td>+49 30 57700400</td>
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