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LMS e-Learning Implementation Podcast Transcript #9 *e-Learning Accessibility For Training Managers and Human Resource Professionals, Part 6*

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Mary Kay Lofurno: Welcome to the sixth and final episode of our e-Learning Accessibility for Training Managers and Human Resource professionals miniseries. My name is May Kay Lofurno and I am the Director of Marketing here at SyberWorks and I am your host.

In the first segment of our mini series, we provided some background on the American Disabilities Act, Section 508, and an introduction to the W3C Accessibility Guidelines. In the second segment, we looked at W3C Level one Accessibility Checkpoints. In the third segment, we looked at W3C Level two Accessibility Checkpoints. In the fourth segment, we looked at Level three Accessibility Checkpoints. In the 5th installment of our mini series, we covered Flash Accessibility. Well today, in the final segment of our mini series, we will be talking about accessibility testing and some of the tools available on the Internet for use in this area. Throughout the mini series, I have been talking with Al Lemieux, Senior e-Learning Developer here at SyberWorks and frequent contributor to the Online Training Content Journal Blog about e-Learning accessibility. OK Al, we are in the home stretch. Are you ready?

Al Lemieux: Absolutely!

Mary Kay: OK. As we discussed in the first episode, what is really important in terms of testing your content when using whatever device the population you are serving is using to read it?

Al: Yeah, there are many different types of assistive technologies that service populations ranging from the blind to autistic and more.

Mary Kay: Al, let's talk a little bit about the various assistive browser technology.

The first group is alternate input devices.

Al: Alternate input devices are for people with limited use of their extremities and who are tied directly to keyboard commands.

Mary Kay: Oh OK. What about screen magnifiers?

Al: Screen magnifiers allow users with visual disabilities to enlarge content. Magnifiers rely on the mouse cursor movements and changes in cursor movement can cause problems with this type of technology.

Mary Kay: Well those of us in the aging baby boomer segment all need one of those but anyway, what about the next one, voice recognition software?

Al: Voice recognition software uses vocal commands to pilot a web page. Most of these programs bind keyboard commands to voice prompts so the enter key enter for submitting forms and tab order becomes critical.

Mary Kay: That makes sense. What about screen readers Al?

Al: Screen readers are text to speech technology that lets users with visual disabilities to hear the content of a website instead of reading it. The technology relies primarily on proper HTML syntax. It reads the content of documents from the top down.

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Mary Kay: OK, we've talked some about screen readers and mentioned Jaws for Windows by Freedom Scientific is, what I'd say is the de facto standard out there. I know there are four runners up, so what are they Al?

Al: Windows-Eyes from GW Micro, Hal from Dolphin, Dracula from Eurobraille and Viso Voice from Assistiveware for the Mac platform.

Mary Kay: And again, the only real way you can be sure that your e-Learning material works is to test it with the assistive technology, used by the population you are serving is using, right?

Al: Yeah, absolutely. But, even then, it is not easy to test the user experience with these tools.

Mary Kay: Really, why?

Al: For example to get an idea how JAWS works, it is recommend that you turn your monitor off, and work with the keyboard commands and listen to the voice to figure out how to navigate through a page. It is not easy. There are so many other factors and scenarios to be careful about when developing accessible sites. The best way that you can insure that the content will be available to the widest possible audience is to use Web Standards for developing pages.

Mary Kay: OK yep, another plug for Web Standards. We got it. If we hadn't gotten it, now, we got it now. So what are some of the tools that are available that you can use to test whether your site is WC3 compliant?

Al: Well if you are using Mozilla's Firefox there are some developer add-ons that you can download from www.Mozilla.org that check for validation accessibility. One is called Total Validator. There is also a developer tool bar that allows you to check for WAI web accessibility initiative validation.

Mary Kay: Yep.

Al: This option actually links to Cynthia Says from Hisoftware. The Cynthia Says portal is a web content accessibility validation solution. It is designed to identify errors in your content related to Section 508 standards and/or the WCAG guidelines.

Mary Kay: Yeah I've seen Fangs and Cynthia Says.

Al: Fangs is another add on that converts pages into text and emulates how a screen reader will output your content. It's made to help developers find accessibility issues quickly. It actually emulates output as if you were using the JAWS screen reader.

Mary Kay: Oh really.

Al: I use WebXact.com from Watchfire. It helps me to validate my pages and gives me accessibility information for all three priority levels. If a page meets priority one standards but not the other two, it will give me information how to make those pages meet those standands. It produces easy to read reports and gives clear explanations. It's a great resource. Another web based tool is Wave 3.0 by WebAim at www.wave.webaim.org. It doesn't give as much information as WebXact but it will tell you if your page is accessible or not. Other tools like www.aprompt.ca and links viewer that enable you to view your site as a text browser but I have not used those specifically so I can't comment on them.

Mary Kay: Al, today's information is incredible. I really appreciate your coming and being with us during this whole series. Please remember that all the links and resources today will be available in the transcript for this podcast located at www.syberworks.com/elearning_podcast.htm in the media center of the SyberWorks website. We hope you enjoyed this mini series and we look forward to talking with you next month. Until then this is Mary Kay Lofurno.

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And.

Al: Al Lemieux from SyberWorks. Have a great month.

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