

The Accessibility Advantage

How accessible experience design
unlocks business value and innovation

**DESIGN
EXECUTIVE
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Table of contents

03	Guidance for reading
<hr/>	
04	Defining accessibility
<hr/>	
05	Opening letter from Gordon
<hr/>	
06	Research questions
<hr/>	
07	Key insights
<hr/>	
14	Business profiles
<hr/>	
16	Leadership voices
<hr/>	
17	Interviews
<hr/>	
52	Recommendations for leaders and practitioners
<hr/>	
56	Conclusion and reflections

Guidance for reading

Commissioned by Fable, this research was conducted by the Design Executive Council (DXC) to examine how accessibility—when treated as a core business capability—strengthens an organization’s ability to innovate, scale, and compete.

The report examines how organizations across industries prioritize usability as a business outcome. The analysis draws on executive interviews and market research from organizations managing complex, global product portfolios with annual revenues ranging from approximately \$5B to \$270B. The cohort includes companies at early stages of their accessibility journey as well as those with highly mature practices.

For executives and board-level stakeholders, the report clarifies how accessibility creates value and how leaders can govern it at scale. Through case studies, it shows how organizations manage complexity, balance oversight with speed, and align accessibility with broader priorities such as revenue growth, differentiation, cost control, brand trust, and readiness for AI. For design leaders these perspectives offer practical guidance to sharpen strategy, fund the right capabilities, and shape operating models, culture, and talent.

This work is part of the Design Executive Council’s ongoing effort to advance the role and impact of strategic design leadership at the highest levels of global business.

Defining accessibility

Accessibility is often misunderstood as a niche discipline or a compliance requirement. It is neither. At its core, accessibility is about removing barriers so people with disabilities can fully use and benefit from products and services. It ensures that digital and physical experiences work for people who rely on assistive technologies, alternative input methods, or different sensory and cognitive processing. But accessibility does not stop there.

We believe accessibility is far broader and far more consequential. When done well, it drives better user experiences by removing barriers, reducing friction, and ensuring products perform reliably in real-world conditions. At its core, accessibility becomes part of how the organization works, not an add-on, but a standard way of designing and building experiences.

Accessibility starts with disability, but it recognizes that human variability is constant. It accounts for permanent disabilities such as blindness or mobility impairments, temporary disabilities resulting from injury or illness, and situational limitations shaped by context and environment, such as reading in low light. These conditions are not edge cases. They reflect how people engage with products and services every day. Designing only for a best-case user experience ignores this reality; designing for accessibility builds resilience into the experience.

Many mainstream innovations, from voice assistants to auto-captioning, began as solutions for people with disabilities. Their widespread adoption reflects a consistent pattern: designing for a broader range of human needs leads to better experiences for everyone.

“Accessibility considerations broaden how organizations operate, moving from designing for ideal conditions to delivering brands, products, and services that perform in the real world.”

Gordon Ching

Founder & CEO, Design Executive Council

Accessibility research is where this practice takes root, evaluating how people with disabilities interact with products through assistive technologies, different accommodations, and varied interaction patterns to identify and remove barriers. It is also a critical part of inclusive research which examines how products work across diverse identities, backgrounds, contexts, and abilities. When organizations invest in both, they move beyond designing for ideal conditions and begin building experiences that work across more contexts and conditions. That breadth is what expands market reach, strengthens adoption and loyalty, and ultimately improves business performance at scale.

A strong foundation in accessibility fuels sustained advantage in the AI era.

For leading organizations across healthcare, banking, entertainment, and retail, the question is no longer whether accessibility matters; it's how to use it to drive growth and efficiency through trustworthy experiences in the AI era. We believe this starts by involving people with disabilities throughout the product development process—from discovery and validation to design systems and governance. When those most affected by design decisions are part of shaping them, organizations unlock more inclusive experiences and measurable business impact.

This report draws on executive case studies with UX and accessibility leaders at **U.S. Bank, Warner Music Group (WMG), Target** and **The Cigna Group**. A clear pattern emerges: mature accessibility practices elevate product experience, reduce costly rework, increase operational efficiency, and strengthen adoption and customer satisfaction. The results show up in revenue growth, market expansion, cost performance, and brand trust—not merely compliance.

This strategic advantage becomes clearer when accessibility is understood as designing for real-world human variability, and not just edge cases. Organizations that validate experiences across diverse human conditions build systems that perform reliably even under complexity. This approach strengthens usability and trust, especially as digital products grow more complex. As a result, leading UX and design teams are moving accessibility upstream by embedding it into discovery, design systems, and validation, so inclusive experiences are built in from the start.

This foundation becomes even more important as AI reshapes how people interact with products. AI builds on the experiences that already exist—if those experiences create barriers, AI can reinforce them. Organizations that invest in accessibility are better positioned to ensure AI features improve usability rather than introduce new friction. In this way, accessibility helps new technologies remain inclusive and trustworthy.

In this context, accessibility is not a constraint on innovation. It is a lever to achieve business advantages. The leaders featured in this report are demonstrating what this looks like in practice. They are elevating accessibility from a compliance obligation to a strategic capability—one that shapes how opportunities are identified, how products are built, and how organizations compete.



Gordon Ching
Founder & CEO, Design Executive Council

How are UX leaders articulating and unlocking the business value of accessibility?

How are UX leaders transforming accessibility from a compliance requirement into a driver of product innovation and revenue growth?

In what ways does embedding accessibility early in the product lifecycle reduce risk and costs downstream?

How does prioritizing accessibility enhance usability for all customers and unlock untapped market opportunities?

What leadership practices and organizational models enable accessibility to scale and gain cross-functional adoption?

What does true maturity in accessibility practice look like, and how do leading organizations build and sustain it?

Key insights

We interviewed 8 senior leaders across 4 organizations, including Chief Design Officers, senior UX leaders, and Heads of Accessibility, from U.S. Bank, WMG, Target, and The Cigna Group. Each of these companies represent enterprises generating approximately \$5B to \$270B in annual revenue, managing complex, multi-business portfolios in regulated industries and global markets.

Despite differences in maturity, leaders aligned on one core insight: accessibility delivers the greatest impact when it is embedded early in discovery, design, and validation and embraced as a shared responsibility across teams rather than a final compliance check. When organizations take this approach, accessibility improves product experience quality, reduces risk, and drives measurable business value.

Across the case studies, this alignment translated into stronger outcomes across the following key strategic dimensions:

- 01 • Revenue growth and market expansion
- 02 • Improved customer experience, innovation and loyalty
- 03 • Operational efficiency, cost and risk reduction
- 04 • Quality and operational reliability at scale
- 05 • Readiness for AI-driven and emerging technologies

Revenue growth and market expansion

01

Accessibility is no longer viewed solely as a compliance requirement. Organizations are increasingly treating it as a growth lever to expand reach, improve conversion, and strengthen market position.

Supporting facts

Market expansion

Investing in accessibility has helped **U.S. Bank** unlock new user segments, particularly the “purple dollar” demographic (people with disabilities and their families and communities) which represents billions of dollars in collective spending power.

Global reach and adaptability

WMG's accessible design foundation ensures product continuity across contexts and audiences without sacrificing quality or usability, which positions the organisation to pursue new opportunities as their strategies evolve.

Revenue expansion

Target scaled its accessible self-checkout through its vendor network, establishing a new retail benchmark and expanding its influence while creating new revenue opportunities.

Differentiation through upstream accessibility

At **The Cigna Group**, accessibility is embedded during innovation and concept development. By considering a broader range of user needs from the outset, teams generate solutions that are more resilient, more creative, and better differentiated in a competitive market.

Improved customer experience, innovation, and loyalty

02

Designing for accessibility improves overall product quality, usability, and satisfaction for all users across diverse environments and conditions—including those with disabilities.

Supporting facts

Task completion ease

For **U.S. Bank**, features like automatic image capture and voice prompts in mobile check deposit improved user experience for blind and low-vision users while streamlining the experience for all customers.

Broad adoption across user segments

WMG's platforms serve a highly diverse audience—from power users who build custom dashboards to teams with limited system familiarity—making accessible design essential for consistent adoption and effective use across user segments.

Universal usability

Target's accessible self-checkout, originally designed for blind and low-vision guests, revealed broader value when many customers preferred the tactile keypad over the touchscreen.

Equitable design experience

The Cigna Group approaches accessibility through a health equity lens, using Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) to account for factors such as age, socioeconomic status, race, and gender—expanding the definition of the typical digital healthcare user.

Operational efficiency and cost reduction

03

Embedding accessibility early prevents expensive fixes later—improving efficiency, reducing rework, and minimizing risk.

Supporting facts

Minimizing remediation

U.S. Bank has found that catching, fixing, and resolving an accessibility issue in design or a testing environment is 3-4 times less expensive than addressing the same issue in production, where rework and churn multiply.

Accelerated delivery

WMG uses its design system to create accessible patterns that can be reused across its ecosystem. By designing once and applying those patterns across multiple products and user types, **WMG** reduces feature development costs and accelerates time to market.

Legal risk mitigation

By embedding accessibility into training and everyday work, **Target** has been able to prevent issues before they escalate, thereby reducing legal exposure and maintaining its strong track record.

Defect reduction

By tracking defect burndown and embedding accessibility upstream, **The Cigna Group** has been able to reduce defects and avoid costly production fixes.

Product consistency at scale

04

Organizations can deliver consistent experiences and reduce production issues at scale by integrating accessibility into their everyday workflows.

Supporting facts

Building shared expertise

At **U.S. Bank** targeted training builds a shared understanding across teams, enabling accessibility to be addressed consistently across teams and reducing downstream issues.

Design system foundations

WMG embeds accessible components and patterns directly into its centralized design system. Teams start from inclusive foundations rather than reinventing solutions, ensuring consistency and usability as the business scales.

Embedded champions

Target places trained Accessibility Champions within product squads to guide decisions early, answer questions in real time, and resolve issues before they escalate, reducing reliance on a single central team.

Clear standards

Target's executive-backed accessibility policy aligns teams around shared quality and experience expectations, reducing risk across the organization.

Center of Excellence model

The Cigna Group's Center of Excellence supports teams across its workforce of 64,000+ employees with shared guidance and standards, helping ensure accessibility is delivered consistently.

Readiness for AI and emerging technologies

05

Organizations can deliver consistent experiences and reduce production issues at scale by integrating accessibility into their everyday workflows.

Supporting facts

Human oversight at scale

At **U.S. Bank**, teams are trained to critically evaluate AI outputs and identify issues early, reducing overdependence on automation and protecting accuracy and usability.

Trustworthy AI foundations

After years of embedding accessibility best practices—such as clear labels, roles, and semantic structure—**The Cigna Group's** digital systems are easier for both people and AI tools to interpret and understand.

Responsible technology design

By combining accessibility practices with diverse data, transparency, and ongoing user testing, **The Cigna Group** approaches AI as an extension of inclusive design. This helps ensure new technologies serve a wider range of users without introducing unintended harm.

Snapshot of recommendations

01

Move accessibility upstream in the product lifecycle

[\(Read more on p.52\)](#)

02

Secure buy-in by linking accessibility to business performance

[\(Read more on p.53\)](#)

03

Drive adoption through shared accountability and cultural change

[\(Read more on p.53\)](#)

04

Validate products with lived experience

[\(Read more on p.54\)](#)

05

Scale adoption through distributed leadership

[\(Read more on p.54\)](#)

06

Accelerate program maturity through targeted early wins

[\(Read more on p.55\)](#)

07

Scale quality of design by integrating accessibility into AI development

[\(Read more on p.55\)](#)

Business profiles

This research profiles 8 senior design, product, and accessibility leaders from global enterprises operating at significant scale and complexity. The organizations span mass-market retail, multinational financial services, global health services, and the entertainment industry—sectors defined by large customer bases, highly regulated environments, and increasingly digital, platform-driven experiences. Together, these companies serve hundreds of millions of customers across physical and digital touchpoints, operate across multiple regulatory regimes, and manage legacy systems alongside rapid innovation.

This mix of industry context and organizational maturity provides a grounded view into how accessibility is being embedded into enterprise strategy, governance, and product development. The resulting perspectives highlight how inclusive practices support innovation, grow marketshare, reduce costs and strengthen customer value—offering design leaders clearer signals for building accessibility as a durable source of competitive advantage.

Companies we profiled



U.S. Bank is a multinational financial services institution and the fifth-largest bank in the U.S. by asset size, with \$695 billion in assets as of September 2025. With a legacy dating back to 1863, the bank has grown into one of the nation's most resilient financial institutions, operating in 26 states.



WMG is a global music company that discovers, develops, and supports artists and songwriters around the world. Through iconic record labels such as Atlantic, Parlophone, and Warner Records, and its publishing arm, Warner Chappell Music, WMG helps create, distribute, and license music across genres and markets. Operating in 70+ countries, the company manages a catalog of more than 1 million copyrights and connects music to audiences worldwide.



Target is a U.S. mass-merchandise retailer founded in 1962, with its first store opened in Roseville, Minnesota. Today, it operates over 1900 stores with strong digital channels reaching more than 75% of the U.S. population. Target sells affordable, on-trend food, beverage, and general merchandise, guided by a purpose-driven brand rooted in care, optimism, and everyday value.



The Cigna Group, a fortune 500 company, with roots dating back to 1792, is one of the oldest and largest global health services companies, serving more than 178 million customer relationships in over 30 countries. Supported by a workforce of over 64,000 and 2 divisions—Cigna Healthcare and Evernorth Health Services—it delivers innovative and connected care solutions.

Leadership voices

Caleb Schmidt

U.S. Bank

Senior Vice President,
Head of Experience Design

Marissa Woodbeck

U.S. Bank

Head of Digital Accessibility,
Experience Design

Christina Goldschmidt

Warner Music Group

Vice President, Product Design

Cody Evol

Warner Music Group

Director, Product Design

Purvi Shah

Target

Vice President, Head of UX Design,
Research and Accessibility

Jake Konerza

Target

Senior Director,
Digital Accessibility

Christina Vallery

The Cigna Group

Chief Design Officer

Jamie Revelle

The Cigna Group

Director, Digital Equity

Interviews - U.S. Bank

U.S. Bank transformed accessibility from a compliance function into a measurable business driver. By embedding it early in product development, tracking impact through data, and aligning efforts to business goals, U.S. Bank reduced costs, improved usability, and expanded market reach. Accessibility is now a shared capability that strengthens customer experience and fuels growth.



Caleb Schmidt

Senior Vice President,
Head of Experience Design



Marissa Woodbeck

Head of Digital Accessibility,
Experience Design

Key points

- 01 How accessibility evolved from a checklist to a catalyst for innovation, efficiency, and customer trust
- 02 How design leadership built a data-driven case for accessibility as a driver of operational excellence and market expansion
- 03 How a learning-first culture turned accessibility from awareness into sustained advocacy

How U.S. Bank evolved accessibility from a silo to business priority

As a leading financial institution with a 160-year history, U.S. Bank approaches growth through a client-first philosophy centered on trust, responsibility, and long-term partnership. That mindset has shaped a culture of digital innovation focused on improving experiences for all customers—setting the foundation for how accessibility became a business priority.

When Marissa Woodbeck, Head of Digital Accessibility for Experience Design, joined in 2022, the bank was already recognized as an industry leader in accessibility. But never one to rest on laurels, Marissa recognized the opportunity to advance them even further, up-leveling an approach already strong in intent and execution by adding a structured approach to documentation and tracking. Her team introduced a comprehensive documentation framework designed to capture, monitor, and report accessibility metrics. This new system made it possible to quantify and measure the benefits of addressing accessibility early in the design phase, and demonstrate that investing in accessibility is not only an ethical imperative but also a sound business decision—reducing costs, improving quality, and supporting the significant spending power of adults with disabilities and their communities.

“Regular engagement with executives helped shift the mindset from risk avoidance to opportunity creation, positioning accessibility as a business enabler.”

Marrisa Woodbeck
Head of Digital Accessibility, Experience Design
U.S. Bank

At U.S. Bank, accessibility is a core capability embedded across design, product, and technology operations, with goals aligned to OKRs. Led by Marissa and a specialized team within Experience Design under Caleb Schmidt, Senior Vice President and Head of Experience Design at U.S. Bank, the group combines deep design and technology expertise with lived experience—several members identify as having a disability themselves. This diversity ensures practical guidance and authentic insight, enabling the team to deliver inclusive experiences from research through delivery.

“Our team is providing much more than WCAG-only guidance.

We are shaping how *experiences* are designed for all users.”

Caleb Schmidt

Senior Vice President, Head of Experience Design

U.S. Bank

By embedding inclusion into everyday operations, U.S. Bank has turned accessibility into a measurable business advantage. Its helping them drive innovation, elevate customer experience, and eventually reinforce its leadership in accessible design.

The tracker that materialized accessibility efforts

To move accessibility from awareness to measurable impact, Marissa and her team developed an enterprise tracker tool that captures the accessibility guidance provided to product teams. Marissa described the system as a tool that “materializes accessibility”, transforming conversations about inclusion into visible, trackable action. What began as her personal record of stakeholder engagement and feedback, evolved into a centralized platform that documents every accessibility consultation.

The tracker captures:

- Which teams are involved in each engagement
- The type of feedback shared and the success criteria referenced
- When accessibility is introduced—during discovery, design, or development
- The time spent in consultation and rework, showing integration into workflows
- Frequency of consultations across teams and issues
- Growth in accessibility learning and adoption across the organization

“The tracker is more than a documentation tool. It delivers actionable data that drives future strategies, prioritization, and resource planning. It empowers us to make informed decisions, not just today, but for the years ahead.”

Caleb Schmidt
Senior Vice President, Head of Experience Design
U.S. Bank

The data helps leaders identify recurring issues, measure the impact of training, and confirm that teams are improving over time. Each year, Marissa's team refines the framework by adding new metrics and retiring others to keep the system focused, actionable, and meaningful. This clarity has strengthened collaboration across teams, reduced friction, and improved overall product quality, turning accessibility into a reliable indicator of organizational maturity and cultural growth.

When accessibility shifted left in the design process

Accessibility is embedded early in U.S. Bank's design process—which shifts it from refinement to conception. 2 years of structured tracking show that accessibility is part of ideation, with teams routinely inviting accessibility designers into innovation sessions. This early collaboration leads to stronger, more inclusive solutions and significantly fewer downstream issues.

The tracker also quantified the financial upside of shifting left. Fixing accessibility issues in production costs 3 to 4 times more than addressing them early, making upfront investment a proven strategy for efficiency and quality. These insights now shape executive discussions, with accessibility metrics reviewed in monthly business routines, and a shared language of accountability and innovation—positioning accessibility as a strategic lever that reduces rework, enhances customer experience, and delivers sustained business value.

“Investing upfront isn't just smart—it's a proven strategy to save time, reduce expenses, and deliver higher-quality experiences.”

Caleb Schmidt
Senior Vice President, Head of Experience Design
U.S. Bank

Challenging assumptions through user data

Across her career, Marissa has encountered a common misconception that accessibility serves a small audience and yields limited returns. At U.S. Bank, her team is challenging that belief through data.

One real-world example came from the bank's mobile app check deposit feature, which was difficult for blind and low-vision users to navigate. Without visual feedback, users couldn't tell when their check was properly positioned or captured. Accessibility consultants identified these barriers and recommended enhancements such as automatic image capture and voice prompts. These improvements supported blind and low-vision users and made the experience faster and more intuitive for all customers.

By showing the broad impact of accessibility, the team demonstrated it was not a matter of cost, but rather opportunity, and not about serving a few, but everyone.

“After all, 1 in 4 Americans lives with a disability, but accessible design benefits the other 3 as well, including everyone from people recovering from temporary injuries to someone balancing 3 bags of groceries.”

Marrisa Woodbeck
Head of Digital Accessibility, Experience Design
U.S. Bank

U.S. Bank's accessibility consultants underwent intensive training to expand their expertise beyond permanent disabilities to include temporary and situational factors that impact how customers interact with digital products.

For example, when you design an experience for a customer with limb differences, you also make it accessible for a tired new parent holding a baby while checking balances, or for an adventure-seeking customer who suddenly finds themselves with a broken arm. By embedding accessibility into design and broadening its scope, U.S. Bank demonstrates that inclusion is not just a compliance requirement—it's a strategic advantage that improves usability, deepens trust, and creates experiences that work for all customers.

Building a culture that values accessibility

Empowerment and empathy have made accessibility a natural part of everyday decision-making at U.S. Bank. Employees are recognized in large team forums for applying inclusive design principles, while empathy labs immerse product teams in real customer experiences using assistive technologies. These hands-on sessions help employees understand the true impact of accessibility and how inclusive design benefits everyone—shifting mindsets faster than any presentation could.

Marissa's teaching background has shaped a learning-first culture that reinforces this approach. Her team leads lunch-and-learns, bootcamps, and tailored sessions that connect global accessibility standards—such as WCAG 2.2, Canada's AODA, and the European Accessibility Act—to practical, day-to-day work. Policies are written to meet the highest level of conformance, supported by annual audits and regular updates that keep the organization ahead of evolving regulations.

As AI becomes more integral to designing experiences, Marissa's team ensures accessibility is built in from the start. Designers actively examine their work to identify bias, apply ethical design principles, and make inclusive decisions throughout the process. AI outputs are reviewed and validated for accessibility and quality, with accessibility designers confirming alignment with standards—ensuring inclusion remains consistent from concept through delivery.

Together, these practices have made accessibility a shared responsibility and a defining part of U.S. Bank's culture—one that blends innovation with empathy. They ensure every employee understands that accessibility isn't just a standard to meet, but a way to serve customers with dignity, independence, and trust.

Unlocking the power of the "Purple Dollar"

Accessibility is one of the ways U.S. Bank lives its values of ethics, inclusion, and doing what's right—creating meaningful impact in the communities it serves. By embedding accessibility into the bank's identity, it's not just about compliance, it's about ensuring everyone can fully participate in financial life and benefit from inclusive experiences. It's also good business.

An estimated 1.3 billion people, or about 16% of the global population, live with a disability. Together with their families and communities, they represent roughly \$13 trillion in spending power, often referred to as the "purple dollar." This makes them a significant market segment that influences brand loyalty and long-term customer retention across industries.

By leading the way in accessibility, U.S. Bank is able to reach and retain this broader customer base—turning inclusive design into a driver of competitive advantage.

**“Accessibility isn't a constraint—it's a growth strategy.
When you design with accessibility in mind, you unlock
your product for more people and expand your reach.”**

Marrisa Woodbeck
Head of Digital Accessibility, Experience Design
U.S. Bank

Interviews - WMG

WMG integrated accessibility into its global design system and digital transformation from the start. By incorporating accessible standards into shared components and workflows, WMG ensures consistent, usable experiences across its worldwide portfolio. Through strong design leadership and shared ownership, accessibility has become both a creative principle and a measurable growth lever.



Christina Goldschmidt

Vice President,
Product Design



Cody Evol

Director,
Product Design

Key points

01 How embedding accessibility early enabled WMG to scale experiences consistently and efficiently across its global portfolio

02 How a culture of collaboration and advocacy made accessibility a shared, everyday practice across teams

03 How prioritizing accessibility helped WMG bridge cultural and technical divides and expand its reach into new markets

How WMG makes music creation, sharing, and listening accessible for all

As one of the world’s “Big 3” music companies, WMG operates at the intersection of creativity, technology, and global culture. WMG represents over 75 years of music history across genres, geographies, and generations. Its multifaceted business spans recorded music, publishing, and marketing services, providing the tools, platforms, and services that support music from the spark of creation through global release.

WMG operates across 2 core business segments—Recorded Music and Music Publishing—supported by artist services and related businesses. Recorded Music includes a diverse portfolio of major and independent labels responsible for discovering, developing, distributing and marketing artists worldwide. Music Publishing operates through Warner Chappell Music, representing songwriters and managing composition rights across media. Complementing these segments is Alternative Distribution Alliance (ADA), WMG’s business-to-business distribution arm serving independent labels and artists globally.

Within this multifaceted ecosystem, many regions and businesses across WMG made their own platforms. As the organization grew in scale and complexity, these platforms reflected the challenges of a decentralized operating model. Teams typically had access only to local-level data and relied on different tools, formats, and processes across labels and regions. While this approach enabled speed at a local level, it created fragmentation at a global scale. This local approach limited economies of scale and limited the ability to extract insights for artists—adding cognitive load and limiting usability and accessibility.

To address these challenges, Christina Goldschmidt, Vice President of Product Design, partnered with Cody Evol, Director of Product Design, to lead design for WMG One—a company-wide digital transformation focused on unifying workflows, data access, and design foundations across the organization. Rather than treating accessibility as a downstream requirement, the team embedded it early as a core principle of the transformation, ensuring that systems could scale consistently across labels, regions, and user types.

“Our audiences span a wide range of knowledge and experience, which makes accessibility *essential* for adoption to help the users.”

Christina Goldschmidt

Vice President, Product Design

Warner Music Group

Under WMG One, previously fragmented workflows and data sources are being unified under a shared, centralized design system. By standardizing workflows, consolidating data access, and applying shared accessibility and design standards, WMG is building a more inclusive digital ecosystem—one that supports global collaboration, improves usability, and enables the company to scale its products and services.

Design systems where cool meets accessible

WMG's design system has become the backbone of how accessibility and design excellence scale across the organization. Built from scratch alongside the company's accessibility work, it functions as both a toolkit and a philosophy—documenting best practices, usage and content guidelines, and component standards that are accessible to designers, engineers, product managers and beyond.

“The design system has been a catalyst for reinforcing accessibility, ensuring everyone can use our products.”

Cody Evol
Director, Product Design
Warner Music Group

During design sprints, the system ensures accessibility and usability are considered from the first sketch through final release. This is supported by ready-to-use Figma Make templates that preload the design system for faster ideation and consistent application. A dedicated team stewards the system's evolution, embedding with product teams to keep it relevant and actionable.

“We use the design system to hide the vegetables. In music, the ‘cool’ is what sells, so we bake accessibility into it.”

Christina Goldschmidt
Vice President, Product Design
Warner Music Group

Continue on next page

Christina explains that in the creative world of music, “cool” design matters—but doing the right thing should never feel like a compromise. By intentionally weaving accessibility into every detail, the team makes it integral to how products are built and experienced.

The system’s foundation rests on the POUR Framework derived from WCAG 2.0 guidelines, each serving as a pillar of accessibility.

- P - Perceivable ensures that users can identify and interact with information through multiple senses, such as sight, sound, or touch.
- O - Operable guarantees that navigation and controls are usable by everyone, including those relying on assistive technologies.
- U - Understandable focuses on clarity, making sure content and interactions are intuitive and easy to follow.
- R - Robust ensures products function reliably across platforms, browsers, and devices.

Applying these principles to WMG's design system has helped scale innovation across the company's creative operations.

Tying accessibility to business growth

At WMG, the impact of accessibility is measured through design system adoption, efficiency, and accessibility scores.

Design systems provide the framework for quantifying accessibility's impact. By embedding accessibility standards directly into shared components and engineering workflows, the design system makes inclusive design measurable. Every accessible element built, reused, or refined becomes quantifiable proof of progress across products.

Christina and Cody connect these results to company OKRs, linking accessibility directly to outcomes like faster delivery, improved quality, and stronger adoption.

“If the goal is to acquire more users, expand into new markets, or accelerate product growth, accessibility becomes a major unlock.

It's essential to tie accessibility to business growth and core metrics to keep the work prioritized.”

Cody Evol
Director, Product Design
Warner Music Group

Clear documentation and guidelines ensure teams stay aligned, turning accessibility improvements into measurable gains in operational performance. Metrics such as Google Lighthouse scores and design system adoption rates quantify progress. Rising scores show improvements in accessibility and design quality, while growing adoption reflects broader cultural integration. Chrome-based plugins complement Lighthouse testing, helping the team benchmark accessibility across products and maintain a cycle of continuous improvement.

At WMG, this mindset ensures accessibility is treated as a business lever rather than a parallel initiative. By grounding inclusive design in measurable outcomes—efficiency, adoption, and quality—the team sustains momentum, earns cross-functional buy-in, and continues to scale accessibility as part of the company's broader growth strategy.

A culture of connection and shared accountability

WMG's digital transformation has been powered by culture as much as by technology. Historically, the company was not organized as a technology-first organization. Many projects were outsourced, and accessibility rarely entered the conversation. When Christina and Cody joined, they found an opportunity to rebuild from the inside.

By integrating accessibility into design critiques and daily collaboration with engineers, they shifted it from a compliance afterthought to a shared principle of great design.

“We’ve built a strong critique culture that embeds accountability into how we design and deliver, making every designer responsible for accessibility through constant peer review and shared standards.”

Christina Goldschmidt
Vice President, Product Design
Warner Music Group

Collaboration that builds momentum

Originally, siloed teams were focused on meeting deadlines, often at the expense of usability and consistency. Rather than issuing directives, Christina and Cody nurtured collaboration from the ground up—bringing designers and engineers together to solve problems in real time. With designers no longer tied exclusively to a single product, flexibility and shared systems naturally emerged. As teams collaborated across interconnected products, the benefits of standardization became clear, turning early user experience obstacles into shared accessibility progress.

Accountability through shared ownership

Accessibility at WMG is now everyone's responsibility. Designers are accountable for inclusive experiences from discovery through delivery, supported by peer reviews and knowledge sharing. When someone has deeper expertise, they coach others—creating a safety net that reinforces standards without hierarchy.

The design team also plays a strategic role in defining product direction through design sprints, shaping long-term user experiences and business outcomes. This culture of shared accountability ensures accessibility remains embedded in every decision and establishes design excellence as a collective achievement.

Design guilds and culture carriers that drive adoption

To sustain progress, WMG introduced a weekly accessibility and standards guild that brings experts together to share knowledge, offer peer support, and collaborate on inclusive design practices. The guild keeps standards current, aligns practices across teams, and reinforces accessibility as a creative enabler.

This collaboration is further strengthened by culture carriers who model holistic ownership and inclusive leadership. For example, Kelly Erickson, Senior Content Designer at WMG, leads cross-functional initiatives, weaving storytelling and empathy into product strategy. Champions like Kelly bridge customer-centricity, design, engineering, and learning, ensuring accessibility stays at the heart of WMG's culture and continues to inspire innovation across the organization.

Hiring talent that values accessibility

Every hiring decision reinforces WMG's commitment to building a team that makes inclusion and accessibility part of everyday design practice.

- **Multidisciplinary expertise:** Designers, content designers, and system thinkers who thrive in both optimization and 0-to-1 work. They help scale accessibility across all stages of design.
- **Inclusive mindset:** Candidates with range, adaptability, and curiosity to explore new perspectives. They help embed empathy and inclusion into every experience.
- **Specialized craft:** WMG hires specialists who blend strong aesthetic judgment with usability best practices, so that experiences are designed with accessibility in mind.
- **Communication and advocacy:** Professionals who articulate why accessibility matters and can drive alignment across teams. They turn inclusion into an organization-wide habit.

At WMG, accessibility has evolved from a design consideration into an organizational mindset. Through collaboration, shared ownership, and intentional hiring, WMG has built a design culture that connects creativity with accountability. The result is a scalable, inclusive system that not only empowers teams internally but also shapes how millions experience music around the world.

Interviews - Target

Target elevates accessibility from compliance to competitive advantage by embedding it into corporate culture, design systems, and product development. By actively involving people with disabilities, the company creates experiences that are more usable for all guests while strengthening loyalty, reducing risk, and unlocking new market opportunities.



Purvi Shah

Vice President and Head of UX
Design, Research, and Accessibility



Jake Konerza

Senior Director, Digital Accessibility

Key points

01 How a strategy of 'designing for all' has expanded Target's market reach to millions

02 How Target's culture embeds accessibility upstream to reduce risks and costs downstream

03 How edge cases are transformed into universal experiences by Target's UX team

How Target designs ‘For All’ and builds loyalty with millions

Target, one of the largest retailers in the U.S., serves millions of guests each week through its stores and e-commerce channels. With 75% of the U.S. population living within 10 miles of a Target, the company sits at the center of everyday life for American families. Its purpose—‘To help all families discover the joy of everyday life’ is powered by its approach of ‘Designing for All’, where accessibility is elevated from compliance to a driver of innovation, trust, and business growth.

“Accessibility represents one of the largest untapped markets in retail as 1 in 4 adults in the U.S., or approximately 70 million people, identify as having a disability, making this segment important for Target.”

Jake Konerza
Senior Director, Digital Accessibility
Target

With an aging population, this number continues to grow, positioning accessibility as both a social imperative and a growing market opportunity.

Strategic pillars of accessibility at Target

For more than 15 years, Target has invested in accessibility as both a core value and a business priority, resulting in one of the most mature accessibility programs in the retail space. To operationalize this vision, Target entrusted champions such as Jake—whose end-to-end product expertise helped unify processes and scale accessibility practices consistently across the enterprise.

Today, Jake's team operates across 3 focus areas: guest-facing experiences, enterprise and team member tools, and compliance and legal. What began as a compliance initiative with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards has evolved into a comprehensive strategy centered on trust, inclusion, and loyalty, ensuring that every guest experience reflects Target's purpose of Designing for All.

Target's accessibility efforts focus on 3 key pillars:

1. Usability
2. Business value
3. Risk reduction

The usability pillar is grounded in inclusive design—recognizing that when digital experiences work well for people with disabilities, they become more usable for all users. This is known as the digital curb cut effect.

Target embeds accessibility into its daily operations through enterprise-wide training, a corporate policy mandating accessible guest experiences, and automated scoring tools that benchmark digital products against WCAG. These practices ensure consistency and accountability at scale.

“With lawsuits around digital accessibility nearly doubling between 2018 and 2024 across industry and projected to grow another 20% in 2026, Target’s foundational work on accessibility has enabled us to stay *diligent*.”

Jake Konerza

Senior Director, Digital Accessibility

Target

By embedding accessibility into both its business strategy and customer experience, Target demonstrates that ‘Designing for All’ strengthens trust, expands markets, reduces operational risk and secures its standing as a retailer of choice for millions.

Accessibility thrives when culture aligns

Purvi Shah, Vice President and Head of UX Design, Research, and Accessibility at Target emphasizes that while leadership holds accountability for embedding accessibility across software and product experiences, it is Target's culture of care, growth, and win together that give the effort lasting impact.

Culture reflected in leadership and daily practices

Target's inclusive culture is embedded in daily operations. With ASL interpretation at major company meetings and events, accessibility is woven into experiences that shape how employees engage with the brand. The UX designers on the team are always inspired to create meaningful impact, and they take pride in working for a company that makes accessibility a priority. This inclusive environment fuels purpose, strengthens retention, and attracts top talent.

Lived experiences that shape product design

In addition to UX designers, researchers and accessibility experts, the Target Accessibility team also consists of consultants with lived disability experience, who join projects from kickoff through delivery and also run accessibility teardowns. As interaction paradigms shift to being even more immersive, more gestural, their input highlights gaps in gesture-driven, highly visual designs and introduces inclusive considerations. This proactive collaboration reframes accessibility as a catalyst for innovation and ensures it's not an afterthought.

Their involvement enables the team to identify day to day usability improvements and resolve issues quickly, keeping pace with innovation. For example, a seemingly small problem—an inactive checkout button that prevented screen reader users from completing purchases—was caught early and fixed. Once corrected, cart abandonment dropped and sales increased among all guests who had previously found the process confusing. This outcome demonstrates the digital curb cut effect and reflects Target's commitment to building experiences that are usable and loved by everyone.

Scaling accessibility through training and champions

Target prioritizes accessibility with enterprise-wide training that equips engineers, technologists, and the broader organization to integrate accessibility into their workflows from the start. They are developing a resource hub tailored to engineers and designers, and have launched an Accessibility Champions program with tracks for UX and engineering. The goal is to create a scalable, durable model where responsibility is shared across designers, engineers and product owners.

“Ultimately, emotion drives action, and Target’s culture ensures accessibility continues to inspire both people and the company.”

Purvi Shah

Vice President, Head of UX Design, Research and Accessibility
Target

She sees accessibility as one of the design community’s most powerful levers, building customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat visits, while also deepening employee pride and retention.

Breakthrough innovations sparked by accessibility gaps

History shows that accessible innovations like audiobooks, originally created for people who are blind or have low vision, can evolve into mainstream technologies. Target embraces this principle, viewing accessibility as a source of growth, differentiation, and trust.

Take the self-checkout, for example. While it offers speed and convenience for most guests, blind and low-vision shoppers have long been excluded. With more than 51 million Americans reporting some level of vision difficulty, this represents both a human challenge and a significant market opportunity.

Small moments, big impact

Enabling deaf team members to clearly engage with guests in stores became the catalyst for meaningful change. What began as a handmade sign created by one employee evolved into Target-branded T-shirts and thoughtfully designed signage that guide guests on how to interact, reducing friction at checkout. The concept is now expanding to include clearer visual cues for common choices such as paper or plastic bags. Target grew an individual effort into a scalable inclusion practice, reinforcing the company's commitment to care, dignity, and inclusive staff and guest experiences.

People behind the breakthroughs

Target employs talented staff with disabilities, like Steve, who also contribute to accessibility work. In 2025, team member Megha Patangi received the National Award from the President of India for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, highlighting the strength of expertise within the company.

By grounding innovation in real human needs, Target has translated accessibility into measurable business impact. From empowering all its guests to shop confidently to reshaping retail standards, Target's initiatives demonstrate how inclusive design strengthens loyalty, builds trust, and delivers long-term competitive advantage.

Target's revolutionary accessible self-checkout machine

Adam Nawrocki, Principal Engineer at Target, first recognized the accessibility gap in self-checkouts after observing a colleague struggle to use an inaccessible kiosk. Motivated to find a solution, he began experimenting with prototypes in his garage.

With support from Target leadership, Adam partnered with Steve Decker, Senior Manager of UX Accessibility at Target and external partners like the National Federation of the Blind to develop an accessible self-checkout system. The new design features braille, tactile controllers, headphone jacks, and high-contrast icons.

The machines are now being rolled out across all Target stores, with full deployment expected by early 2026. Through Target's vendor network, the kiosks are also being made available to other retailers, positioning this innovation to set a new accessibility standard for the retail industry.

“Target’s new self-checkout marks a first of its kind in the industry as people who are blind weren’t just consulted but actively involved in leadership, strategy, and shaping the vision for this experience.”

Steve Decker

Senior Manager, UX Accessibility
Target

Target takes pride in offering one of the first and only accessible self-checkout systems in the country—a solution that customers with low vision describe as empowering. As a blind leader and father, Steve shared how the experience restores independence and dignity to everyday shopping. “I love being independent, and I love that I can shop for my family just like everyone else,” he said. His reflection underscores how inclusive design fosters trust and strengthens customer relationships.

Interviews - The Cigna Group

The Cigna Group scaled accessibility through a Center of Excellence that embeds standards into design systems and distributes ownership across teams. By integrating accessibility early and measuring maturity over time, the company moved from compliance to innovation—improving user experience, reducing risk, and unlocking growth. Accessibility now also guides its AI strategy, ensuring new technologies are inclusive by design.



Christina Vallery

Chief Design Officer



Jamie Revelle

Director, Digital Equity

Key points

- 01** How a commitment to digital equity strengthens trust, usability, and satisfaction across its global user base
- 02** How establishing a small Center of Excellence scaled accessibility to a global workforce through a distributed ownership model
- 03** How applying accessibility, ethics, and equity principles to product development paves the way for an AI-driven future

How The Cigna Group built a scalable accessibility practice for its millions of customers

The Cigna Group is a global health company guided by a vision of building a better future rooted in the vitality of every individual and every community. For them, accessibility is not a legal mandate, but a core value and strategic imperative—embedded into their quality standards and reflected in the design of their universal and human-centred digital experiences.

Christina Vallery, Chief Design Officer, oversees enterprise design strategy, while Jamie Revelle leads the digital accessibility and equity team for The Cigna Group. Jamie's team is made up of accessibility experts with varying degrees of technical expertise operating as a Center of Excellence (COE), instead of a development or QA function. The team plays an enterprise-wide role in ensuring digital products are accessible and equitable by design. Here's how Jamie's team achieves it:

- Their most critical involvement happens early in the product development lifecycle, where they make design systems and foundational components accessible before work reaches downstream teams.
- They partner closely with UX, product, and engineering groups to integrate standards from early ideation through release.
- This shared accountability model makes accessibility a shared responsibility across the organization.

“Although the team is small, the Center of Excellence model has enabled accessibility practices to scale seamlessly across a global workforce.”

Jamie Revelle
Director, Digital Equity
The Cigna Group

10 years of accessibility excellence

The COE isn't a new initiative. It's been in place for nearly a decade and continues to scale through partnerships with employee resource groups. This helps to safeguard high accessibility standards in the internal communications and digital assets used by employees globally.

The state of digital experiences under the COE is a stark contrast to early accessibility efforts at The Cigna Group which were rooted in compliance and risk mitigation. This often produced stripped-down, text-heavy alternatives. As the team shifted to embedding accessibility directly into core experiences through the COE, improvements benefited all users, including people with disabilities, benefit from the improvements. The code became cleaner, the interaction patterns felt more intuitive, and digital quality improved for all user groups.

As the COE model matured, it enabled The Cigna Group to unlock new markets, enhance AI-driven products, reduce legal risk, and strengthen customer loyalty. What began as a standards function has become a strategic engine for innovation and competitive advantage.

“At The Cigna Group we believe that accessibility is part of innovation and it's seen as a catalyst for business transformation.”

Christina Vallery
Chief Design Officer
The Cigna Group

Prioritizing digital equity as a foundation for business growth

The Cigna Group’s commitment to digital equity stems from its focus on social determinants of health (SDOH) and the responsibility to ensure that every population across socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and ability can fully engage with their healthcare offerings.

“If your products aren’t accessible, you risk losing clients or never reaching them at all because their expectations and accessibility needs simply aren’t being met.”

Jamie Revelle
Director, Digital Equity
The Cigna Group

When consumers can’t access or use self-service digital tools, the organization risks losing trust, satisfaction, and even market share. Inaccessible products create barriers for users and trigger costly remediation once experiences are already in production. Prioritizing accessibility early in the design and development process protects the business, reduces rework, and helps The Cigna Group meet the expectations of clients who increasingly demand inclusive digital experiences.

For Christina, digital equity is also a catalyst for innovation. She sees accessibility as a creative discipline that requires thinking convergently and balancing multiple variables, and then designing effectively within constraints. This mindset positions accessibility as a source of differentiation, creating stronger, more resilient solutions that benefit both users and the business.

“Treating accessibility as a driver of growth creates differentiation, and that differentiation fuels success. It marks an important shift in mindset from viewing accessibility as risk mitigation to seeing it as a pathway for growth.”

Christina Vallery
Chief Design Officer
The Cigna Group

Digital equity transcends the status of moral mandate and becomes a competitive pathway to deeper customer loyalty, broader market reach, and long-term business success.

Getting leadership buy-in for accessibility

The Cigna Group’s leaders understand the responsibility of serving a broad and diverse population. Accessibility naturally aligns with this mission, yet leaders join the journey at different paces.

- Some assume accessibility benefits only a small group of users.
- Others lack firsthand exposure to assistive technology or a clear understanding of the design, staffing, and investment required.
- Many also need visibility into the ROI of accessibility initiatives.

To bridge these gaps, Jamie’s team focuses less on explaining why accessibility matters and more on showing how it can be achieved in a complex technical environment.

“When leaders see how accessibility is embedded in our tools, methods, and workflows, it removes uncertainty. It helps them clearly understand how accessible practices translate into higher-quality experiences.”

Jamie Revelle
Director, Digital Equity
The Cigna Group

Storytelling is a powerful tool in this effort. Beyond compliance narratives, the team shares videos of real users navigating digital experiences with screen readers—often revealing challenges leaders have never witnessed. These moments create empathy, turning accessibility from an abstract requirement into a human-centered priority.

The Cigna Group also recognizes that leadership funding decisions hinge on understanding the organizational capability required to deliver accessible products. While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is commonly known in the healthcare industry, many teams lack hands-on experience with accessible design, making it difficult for leaders to assess necessary resourcing. The COE addresses this by clarifying capacity needs and providing structured training, role-based guidance, and practical tools that raise organizational accessibility maturity.

Ultimately, accessibility requires visible leadership sponsorship, not just grassroots passion. Christina and Jamie strengthen buy-in by setting clear policies, demonstrating measurable ROI, and sharing success stories that showcase impact. As they expand the narrative to include digital ethics and equity, leaders play an increasingly critical role in championing the next phase of The Cigna Group’s inclusive design evolution.

Scaling accessibility through a distributed ownership model

The Cigna Group's ability to scale accessibility across a global workforce is driven by an education strategy designed to extend the reach and influence of Jamie's small team far beyond its size. A core component of this strategy is the "train-the-trainer" model.

- Employees participate in foundational training and then bring that knowledge back to their own product, design, engineering, and operational teams.
- Over time, this has created a distributed network of accessibility champions embedded across the organization.
- These champions are passionate, informed, and able to influence decisions where the work actually happens.

Partnerships extend this reach even further. By collaborating with The Cigna Group's Achieving Better Lives for Everyone (ABLE) Employee Resource Group, Jamie's team taps into communities they don't directly manage, ensuring that accessibility practices spread into corners of the enterprise they couldn't reach alone. Self-service training pathways on the intranet provide additional scale, allowing employees to upskill on demand without waiting for formal sessions.

This education ecosystem makes a measurable difference. Teams increasingly identify and fix accessibility issues independently. This frees Jamie's team to focus on the more complex cases, offering manual testing or consulting on hard-to-solve defects.

“The best wins are the ones we don't touch, but when someone across the enterprise makes an accessibility improvement simply because they cared.”

Jamie Revelle
Director, Digital Equity
The Cigna Group

Everyday accessibility decisions happen organically across teams. At its core, the model works because it's grounded in influence rather than enforcement. Jamie teaches, guides strategy, and builds systems that help teams shift how they think and work. By distributing ownership and building skills enterprise-wide, The Cigna Group ensures accessibility is not just supported by a small team but sustained by the organization as a whole.

Tracking the maturity of the accessibility program

To understand how accessibility practices are taking hold across the enterprise, The Cigna Group uses a structured maturity and measurement framework that evaluates both engagement and outcomes. Training is an early indicator: the team tracks completions of online courses as well as attendance at virtual training sessions. This shows how many employees are actively building accessibility skills.

A more holistic view comes from The Cigna Group's enterprise accessibility rubric, which assesses the "accessibility health" of partner teams each quarter. The rubric evaluates whether teams can do the following:

- Consistently perform automated testing with approved tools.
- Request manual testing support for critical releases.
- Incorporate accessibility considerations into design and product workflows.

These insights help Jamie's team identify growth opportunities and tailor support where it's most needed.

The team also reports monthly and quarterly success metrics tied to product quality. These include:

- Defect burn-down trends
- Month-over-month accessibility tool scores
- Volume of consulting engagements and manual tests completed
- Number of defects prevented from reaching production through early detection with testing tools

Potential escalations are flagged early so leadership sees emerging risks. Compared to a decade ago, the organization has seen marked improvements in design consistency, development quality, and cross-team accountability.

“Teams now take pride in meeting accessibility expectations.

Designers, product owners, and engineers motivate one another to uphold higher standards.”

Christina Vallery
Chief Design Officer
The Cigna Group

This cultural shift reflects not only increased maturity but a deeply rooted commitment to inclusive, high-quality digital experiences.

Preparing for an AI-driven future

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in digital healthcare experiences, The Cigna Group is expanding its accessibility practice to address new technical, ethical, and experiential considerations.

Their approach starts with a simple idea: accessible AI should follow the same principles that guide accessible, human-centered design:

- Diverse data sets
- Clear and transparent algorithms
- Continuous user testing

These principles keep AI systems performing equitably across populations, avoiding bias, and generating outputs - including code - that align with accessibility best practices from the start.

Since The Cigna Group has already established a mature accessibility framework, the company can bring structure and discipline to its AI development work. Shared language, governance structures, and design systems built over the past decade now serve as a foundation for integrating inclusive AI capabilities. This helps The Cigna Group introduce AI-powered experiences without compromising accessibility, rather than retrofitting fixes after products are built.

With this foundation, The Cigna Group is broadening the conversation. The focus is shifting from thinking only about inclusive UX to considering the wider ethical impact of technology.

“Transparency, explainability, and accountability are becoming essential requirements, especially in environments where experiences are augmented or mediated by AI.”

Christina Vallery
Chief Design Officer
The Cigna Group

Christina refers to this expanding landscape as “diversified deployment environments,” where AI introduces entirely new contexts and interactions that didn’t exist before. A key question driving exploration is how accessibility must evolve when end users are not only humans but also AI agents acting on their behalf.

Seeing a blind team member use AI-powered glasses to read visual content underscored for Jamie how rapidly user expectations and interaction models are evolving with emerging wearables. Her team is now closely examining how these assistive technologies—including AI-enhanced tools—reshape digital experiences and redefine accessibility requirements.

By proactively addressing these technological changes, The Cigna Group is shaping a future where accessibility and AI advance together, ensuring equitable, transparent, and high-quality experiences for all users.

Recommendations for scaling the impact of accessibility

01 Move accessibility upstream in the product lifecycle

Integrate accessibility into discovery and product development, not just QA.
Early alignment reduces rework and leads to an improved user experience.

“By embedding accessibility early in the product development lifecycle, teams can increase delivery velocity and significantly reduce downstream remediation.”

Purvi Shah
Vice President, Head of UX Design, Research, and Accessibility
Target

02

Secure buy-in by linking accessibility to business performance

Align accessibility goals with core business objectives. When accessibility is connected to revenue targets, customer experience metrics, risk management, and product performance, it moves from a side initiative to a shared priority.

“We align our Accessibility Experience Design department goals and OKRs with the organization's business priorities to drive shared outcomes.”

Marissa Woodbeck
Head of Digital Accessibility, Experience Design
U.S. Bank

03

Drive adoption through shared accountability and cultural change

Embed accessibility into everyday workflows through clear policy, governance, and centralized tracking, while distributing ownership across teams. This approach reinforces accountability, builds organizational confidence, and enables sustained adoption at scale.

“Teams and individuals are required to align with accessibility as part of the company policy, which embeds expectations in day to day work.”

Caleb Schmidt
Senior Vice President, Head of Experience Design
U.S. Bank

“We prioritize communication and influence when hiring designers so they can champion accessibility and advocate for it across the organization.”

Christina Goldschmidt
Vice President, Product Design
Warner Music Group

04 Validate products with lived experience

Build accessibility through standards, policy, and embedded expertise, and reinforce it with real user validation to ensure impact.

“Its crucial to engage folks with disabilities and bring them to the table to show quick wins and drive buy-in for accessibility and not just depending on testing tools.”

Jamie Revelle
Director, Digital Equity
The Cigna Group

05 Scale adoption through distributed leadership

Scale accessibility by developing experts who sit within product teams. These champions guide decisions in real time, coach peers, and ensure accessibility is considered as features move from design to delivery.

“To scale accessibility, you need embedded champions who understand how design decisions move through development and delivery.”

Purvi Shah
Vice President, Head of UX Design, Research, and Accessibility
Target

“Without expanding headcount, we scale accessibility through culture carriers who constantly advocate for how accessibility should be embedded into everyday product decisions.”

Christina Goldschmidt
Vice President, Product Design
Warner Music Group

06 Accelerate program maturity through targeted early wins

Start with focused, high-impact pilots. Early successes build credibility, demonstrate value, and make it easier to expand accessibility across the organization with confidence.

“Don't try to boil the ocean. Start small but be strategic and focus on the most high-impact areas.”

Christina Vallery
Chief Design Officer
The Cigna Group

07 Scale quality of design by integrating accessibility into AI development

As AI reshapes product development and customer experiences, integrate accessibility into AI systems from the outset. Establish clear standards, train teams to evaluate AI outputs, and automate baseline compliance so human expertise can focus on innovation, usability, and governance.

“Building accessibility into AI systems from the start reduces downstream risk, improves product quality, and ensures new technologies scale responsibly across diverse user needs.”

Christina Vallery
Chief Design Officer
The Cigna Group

Conclusion & reflections

“Soon, it won’t just be humans interacting with digital experiences. AI agents will increasingly act on our behalf. What does accessibility mean in that world, and how must it evolve?”

Jamie Revelle
Director, Digital Equity
The Cigna Group

What is the accessibility advantage, and how do organizations build it?

As AI becomes embedded in everyday products and services, the stakes for accessibility continue to rise. This research expands the definition of accessibility. It is not simply a compliance requirement. It is a strategic capability that shapes how technology serves people and how organizations earn trust in a time of rapid transformation.

Customers are already asking important questions. Can AI-enabled products be trusted? Will they simplify life or introduce new friction? Will they reduce barriers or reinforce them?

The answers depend on how these experiences are designed, governed, and continuously improved.

Organizations must decide how they will design AI-driven experiences that are equitable, reliable, and resilient across a broader range of human abilities, contexts, and lived realities. Technology is becoming more adaptive, more personalized, and more deeply integrated into daily life. When accessibility is embedded early and informed by real user experience, products become more usable, more dependable, and more widely adopted. Leaders who apply accessibility principles to guide reinvention in the AI era will build stronger foundations for sustainable growth. They will create experiences that work across diverse abilities and environments and earn trust as technologies continue to evolve.

Design, UX, and accessibility leaders have a critical role to play in shaping this future. Their opportunity is to embed accessibility into how opportunities are defined, how products are validated, and how success is measured. The most effective organizations will make this commitment visible at the highest levels, reflected in company values, strategic priorities, and leadership accountability.

Looking ahead, organizations that connect accessibility to measurable outcomes, integrate inclusive design across teams, and scale its impact throughout the enterprise will do more than expand access. They will help define what responsible innovation means in the AI era and set the standard for how technology can serve society with intention and care.

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Design Executive Council (DXC) is the premier membership network for senior design and experience executives shaping the world's most influential companies. Through its membership programs Council, Enterprise, and Forum, DXC convenes and guides executives, teams, and industry leaders to advance the strategic role and business impact of design leadership at the C-suite and Board level.

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Fable is the leading accessibility research platform, powered by people with disabilities. It help teams understand how real people experience digital products, and turn those insights into inclusive designs aligned with accessibility standards. With Fable, researchers, designers, accessibility leaders, and developers can run remote research and testing with people with disabilities on demand.

With its expert-led training, teams build the confidence and skills they need to design and ship inclusive products. Leading digital teams use Fable to create experiences that work for the 1 billion people living with disabilities.

To learn more, visit:

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Thank you to our contributors for shaping bold and provocative perspectives on The Accessibility Advantage and the critical role design and research in driving business success in a world with AI.

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