

#A11yship: Building accessibility focused teams

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2. Slack's accessibility journey
 - a. Standardize
 - b. Prioritize
 - c. Educate
3. Case study: Clips
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Hello 🖐️



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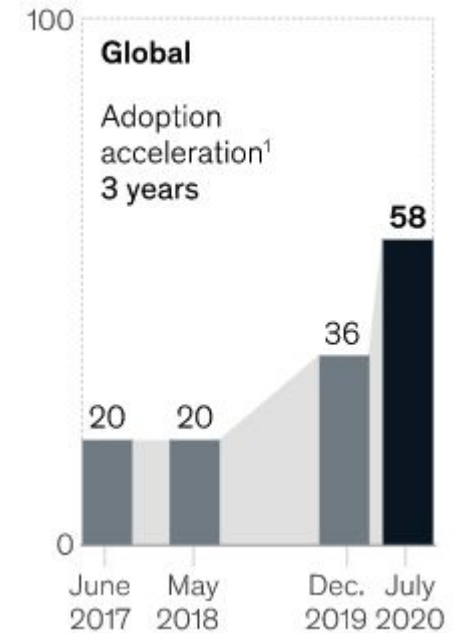
Group Product
Manager, Slack



**Accessible tech is a
right, not a luxury**

Why this matters

- The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically accelerated the use of technology for critical services.
- As more services move online, equitable access to tech is not just a luxury. It is essential to ensuring everyone has access to these services to live comfortable, holistic lives.
- More and more, companies are starting to care about accessibility as a must have requirement for their vendor software.



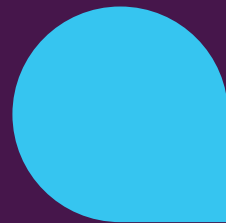
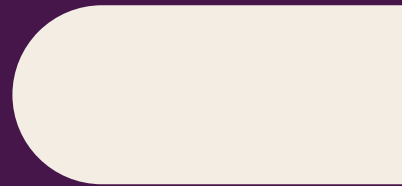
¹Years ahead of the average rate of adoption from 2017 to 2019.

Why this matters

We should care about a11y, not just because our customers care about it, but because it's the right thing to do.

- It ties directly into our core value of being a product manager - empathy. ❤️
- It's critical to ensuring that the technology we build can be used by everyone, thereby creating maximum impact.
- If we want to live in a more representative world, we need to ensure everyone has access to the same tools and services.

Slack's accessibility journey



Where we started

- 2020 was a big year of scale for Slack, as more companies shifted to working remotely, and needed an efficient virtual communication tool.
- In Fall 2020, we realized that as our product scaled, we had not scaled our accessibility efforts to match, resulting in us accruing significant accessibility debt.
- Speaking to teams about the issue showed this wasn't because we didn't care. A11y aligns directly with our mission and values as a company - we want to build inclusive products to make everyone's working lives simpler, more pleasant and more productive.
- But many of our teams didn't know how to. A11y requires specialized knowledge and we had no process baked in to help teams prioritize this work. 🤔



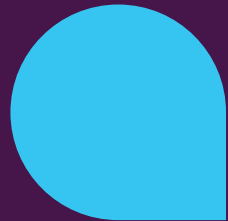
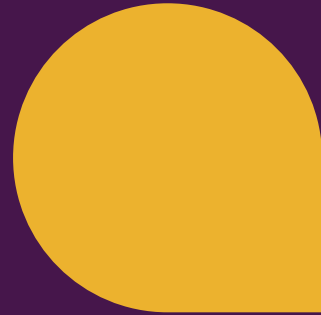
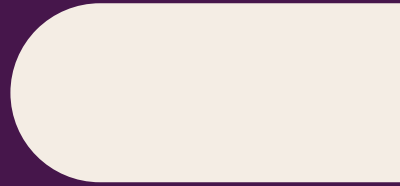
What did we do?

Based on the feedback from all our teams, product, design and engineering worked cross functionally within the systems accessibility team to come up with a three step process to not just pull us out of the a11y debt we were in, but also to ensure we never got there again.

1. Standardize
2. Prioritize
3. Educate



Standardize



What we did



- In partnership with product, design and engineering, across all PDE teams, we created a framework and set of standards (the Slack Accessibility Standards, SAS) to help identify the most critical accessibility issues.
- Standards that were created using existing baselines such as WCAG, but keeping only those guidelines that would apply to our product.
- Each feature was assigned a rating based on how it performs against certain baseline accessibility checks.



Slack Accessibility Standards (SAS)

A

SAS-A

The feature is raising the bar for a11y within the industry.

B

SAS-B

A11y workflows are not just present, but efficient and delightful, as identified by the tester.

C

SAS-C

All functionality in the feature is usable with baseline assistive technologies. **This is the minimum score required for all features.**



Where we are



To help ensure we're shipping accessible products and features, accessibility checks are now included in each key step of the product development life cycle at Slack.

1. Every feature at Slack has an associated **Accessibility Health Report**, which outlines the level of SAS compliance for that feature.
2. The report is used a guide for creating the **accessibility design spec**.
3. The report is a required artifact in meetings to evaluate launch readiness.
4. A feature must meet the minimum **SAS-C** rating in order to ship.



What's coming up

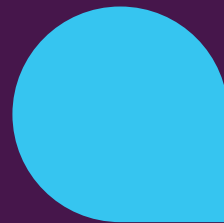
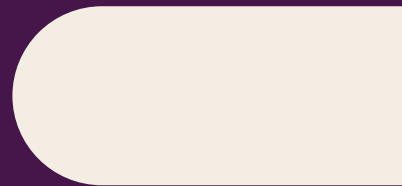


Moving forward, we want make it as easy as possible for all teams at Slack to build accessible features.

- Continuing to build on Slack Kit (our internal design system) and ensuring that all components are accessible in all configurations out of the box
- With the free cycles earned back from standardizing delivery review processes, our developers are freed up to spend more time building out core a11y infrastructure that oversees e.g. keyboard navigation behavior across the whole app



Prioritize



What we did



Prioritize

- The rating was applied to individual bugs, to identify which ones caused a feature to slip below the baseline (SAS-C).
- This is helped us prioritize fixing the most critical issues first (SAS-C bugs).
- We did this quarter over quarter, setting actionable goals to burn down our a11y debt.



Accessibility has become incorporated into the product development process.

- User research during discovery now includes users with disabilities through our partner Fable.
- All features now include an accessibility spec as part of the designs and mocks.
- The testing / quality engineering process also includes accessibility testing through our testing partner, Ultra.



Where we are



✓ **We have fully burned down our high priority accessibility debt on desktop, and will finish burndown on mobile bugs by the end of April.**

✓ Designing for accessibility from the start - Clips and Huddles, and other priority initiatives were fully accessible from launch.

✓ The rate of new high priority accessibility bugs being reported has dropped to below 10 a month on average.



What's coming up

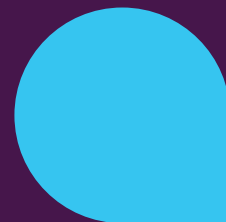
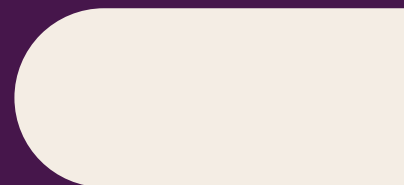


Once we've addressed the most egregious and specific bugs, we can shift our focus to prioritizing what we work on in a more holistic way.

- Center learning about users' *whole* experiences inside Slack to identify points of friction
- Work to get user feedback even earlier in the development process
- Test regularly, both automated and with real users, to catch regressions early



Educate



What we did



- We began offering teams more support and guidance to ensure they could build for accessibility from the start.
- We also conducted trainings and workshops to educate our teams around accessibility as well as build empathy through interviews with users who use assistive technology.



Where we are



- The Accessibility team has a channel and weekly office hours for teams to come with questions on design and implementation.
- Continued investment in trainings for product, design and engineering teams.



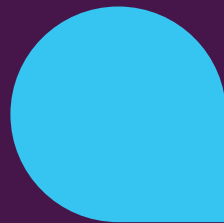
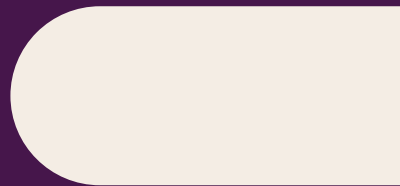
What's coming up



- Create and deliver specialized trainings for designers, engineers, and managers
- Incorporate these trainings into new employee onboarding
- Invite non-a11y team members to participate in user research sessions



Case study: Clips



Back to the beginning

How could we, and by extension our customers...

1

Spend less time on video calls?

2

Share ideas and collaborate with teams distributed across time zones?

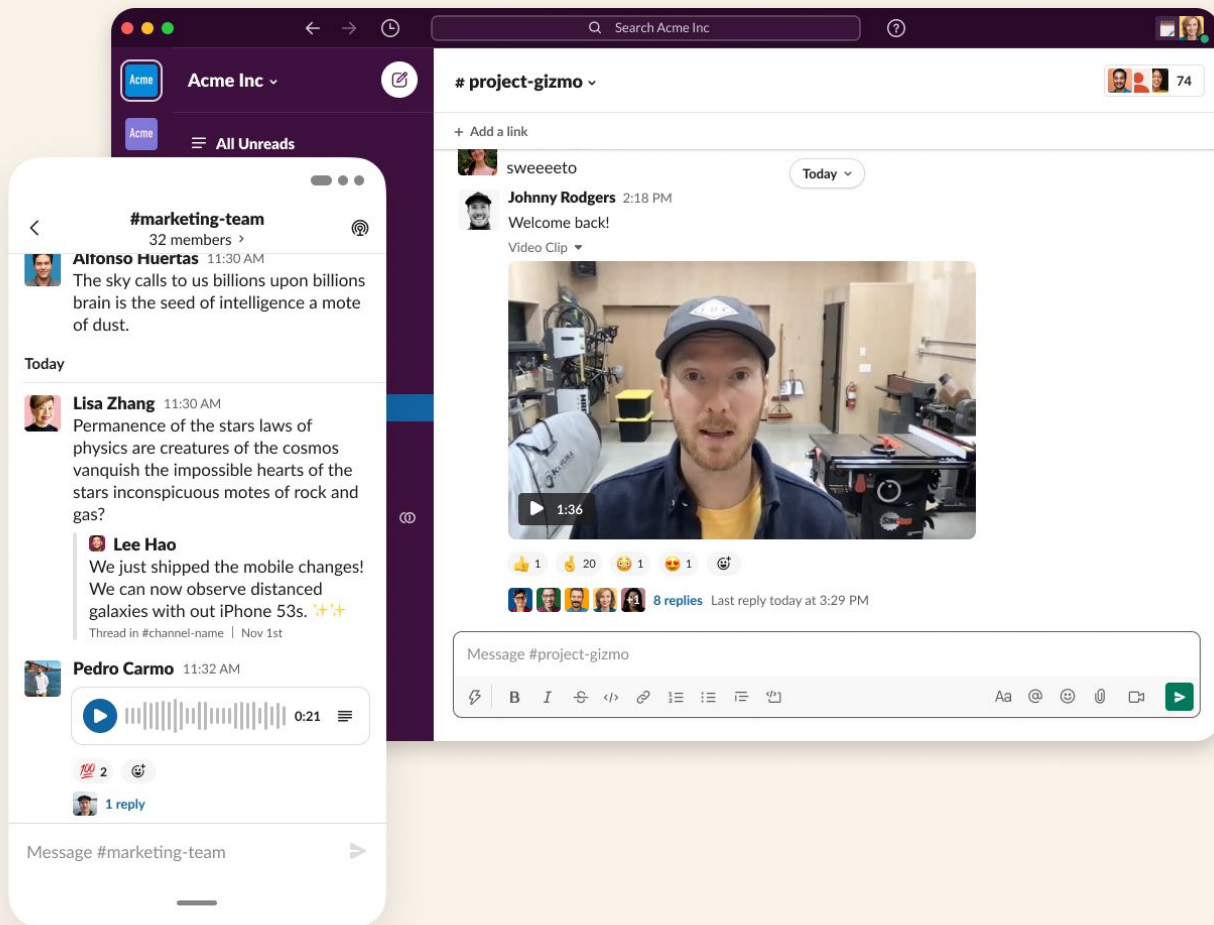
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Recreate the serendipity of in-office conversations?

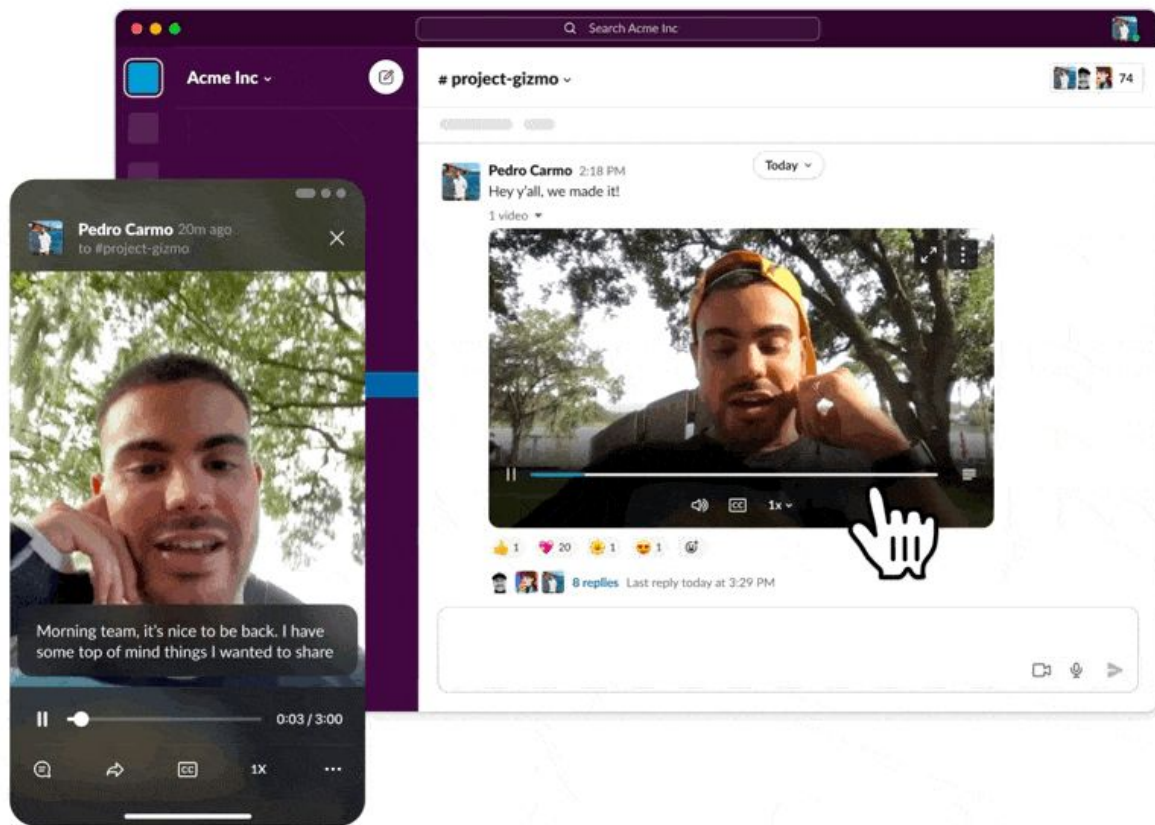
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See, hear, and feel connected to one another?





Captions



Transcripts

The image displays three overlapping screenshots of a Slack workspace for "Acme Inc".

Top Screenshot: Shows the "#project-gizmo" channel. A message from Johnny Rodgers (2:18 PM) says "Welcome back!" and includes a video clip. The left sidebar shows a list of channels: #brand-design, #project-gizmo (selected), #general, #marketing-data, #market-research, and #social. Below the channels are direct messages with Slackbot, Lisa Dawson, and Sara Benson.

Bottom-Left Screenshot: Shows the same channel view, but with a "Video Transcript" overlay on the right side of the video player. The transcript text is as follows:

Video Transcript
Johnny Rodgers at 10:58 AM

00:00
Hey everyone I wanted to give a quick demo of AV home.


00:05
Uh, so here is a new page view in which you can see all of the uploaded stories and huddles active in a workspace

00:10
Um, is still uh sort of rough but it should give us an idea of how useful it is by trying it. I was thinking about having different sections for different channels or groups of conversations


00:15
So that's kind of the idea, let me know if you have any thoughts or want to try

Bottom-Right Screenshot: Shows the video player interface with the transcript overlay. The video is at 1:36. The transcript text is the same as in the bottom-left screenshot.





Anna Niess
1 day ago in #proj-gizmo



Hey everyone I wanted to give a quick demo of the media player

00:00
Hey everyone I wanted to give a quick demo of the video player

00:05
Uh, so here is a new page view in which you can see all of the uploaded videos and huddles active in a workspace

00:10
Um, is still uh sort of rough but it should give us an idea of how useful it is by trying it. I was thinking about having different sections for different channels or groups of conversations

00:15
Hey everyone I wanted to give a quick demo of AV home.

00:20
Uh, so here is a new page view in which you can see all of the uploaded stories and huddles active in a workspace

00:21
Um, is still uh sort of rough but it should give us an idea of how useful it is by trying

Transcript Hide

00:00
Hey everyone I wanted to give a quick demo of the video player

00:05
Uh, so here is a new page view in which you can see all of the uploaded videos and huddles active in a workspace

00:10
Um, is still uh sort of rough but it should give us an idea of how useful it is by trying it. I was thinking about having different sections for different channels or groups of conversations

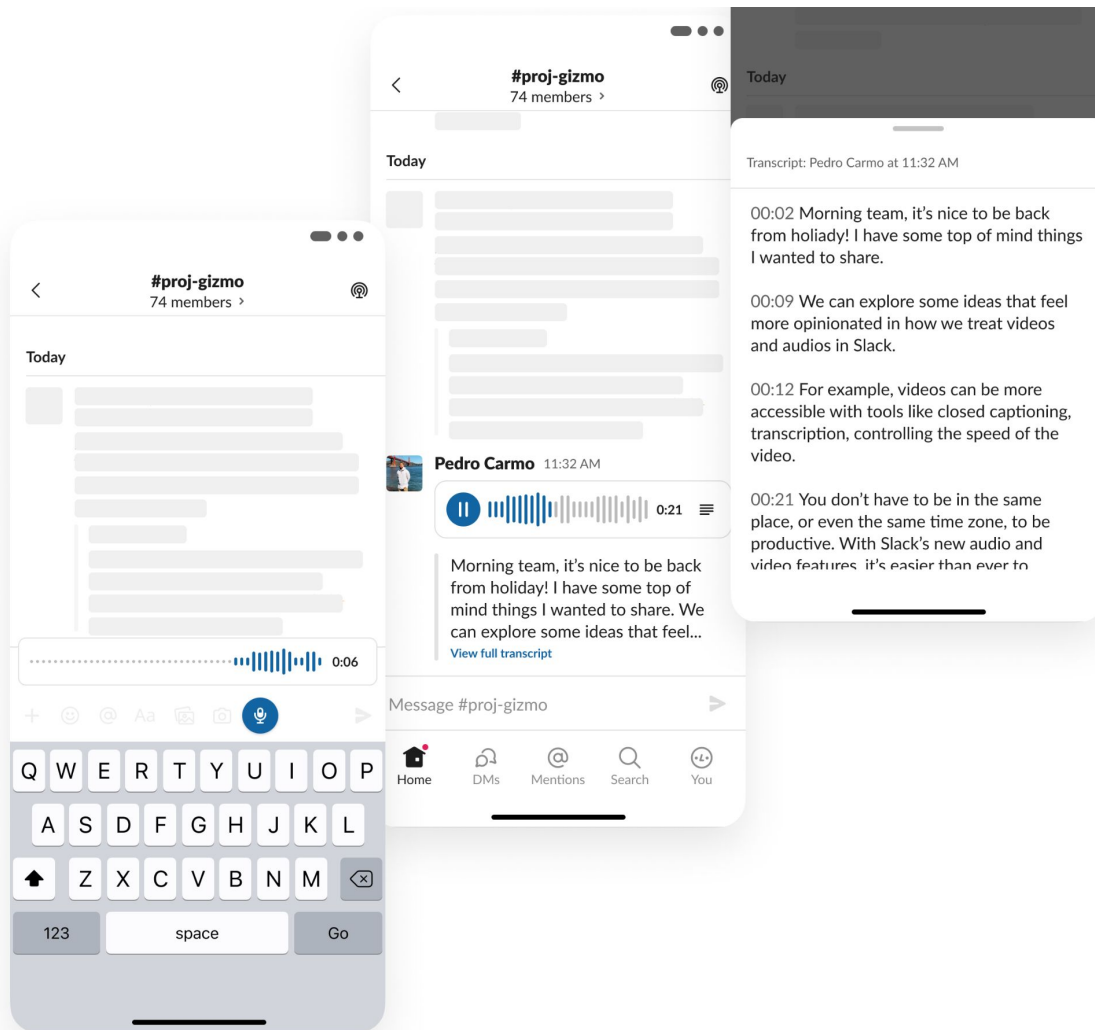
00:15
Hey everyone I wanted to give a quick demo of AV home.

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Uh, so here is a new page view in which you can see all of the uploaded stories and huddles active in a workspace

00:21
Um, is still uh sort of rough but it should give us an idea of how useful it is by trying

0:13 / 0:36 CC 1x





Scratching the surface

- Closed Captions across all players and platforms
- Transcripts across all players and platforms
- Multitasking
- Screenreader labels, and screenreader interruptions during the recording experience
- Keyboard navigation & focus management



Q&A

Thank you

