How short-term gains helped a leading cloud provider to prioritize accessibility

axe-con 2022



Rachael Penfil (she/her/hers) UX Manager, Sandstorm® Accessibility Lead

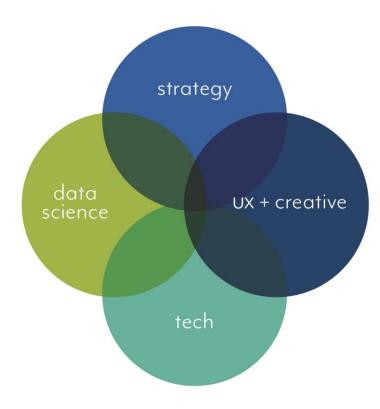




Devin Owsley-Aquilia

(they/them/theirs) Scrum Master, Sandstorm® Accessibility Lead





Hi, we're Sandstorm.

- 20+ yr global digital agency
- **4,200+ hours** of UX research & usability testing
- Led **200+ hours** of accessibility instruction in 2021
- Inclusive + accessible design
- IAAP members + CPACC certified
- Drupal Acquia + Kentico certified

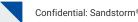
THE OPPORTUNITY

A **leading cloud service provider** needed to improve the usability and accessibility of training and certification information.

- Upcoming brand refresh
- Users consistently reported they couldn't find information easily

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• Known accessibility issues

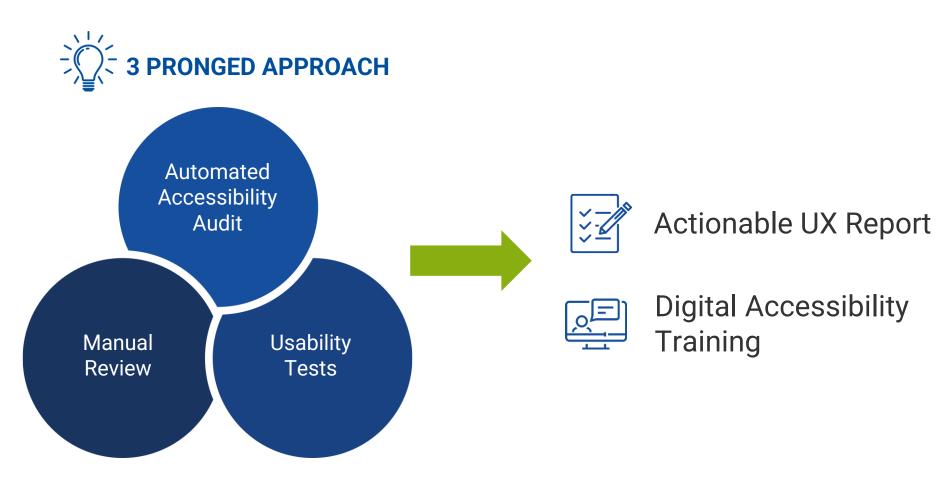




- The team didn't "own" all of their content
- Different teams managed the brand, content, and functionality
- Different sites with different user experiences
- Limited access to their back end







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Simultaneously, we kick-started:

Usability studies



Automated accessibility audit on 120 pages

(using Deque's Axe DevTools)





Usability Study Participant Screener



Prioritize accessibility at every step - not just the "accessibility-focused" items.



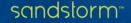
Make a smart, inclusive recruitment screener

Included demographic questions:

- Age
- Gender identity
- Racial or ethnic identity
- Disability/ability
- Assistive technology/adaptive strategy use
- Pronouns + name

	٥
7. What is yo	ur age? 🗢 o
O 18-24	
O 25-34	
O 35-44	
O 45-54	
O 55-64	
O 65 and old	ler -
O Prefer not	to say
8. How do yo	u identify? Select all that apply as you are comfortable. $ \heartsuit $ 0
Agender	
Genderqu	eer, Two-Spirit, or non-binary
🔲 Man	
Transgend	ler or another non-cisgender identity
U Woman	

Why ask about disability and assistive technology separately?



Modeling inclusivity & fostering trust

3. Demographic Information

Great usability is only possible after inclusive and diverse testing practices!

In order to establish a smooth, functional, and delightful user experience for all, we conduct comprehensive user testing with diverse participants (i.e., considering gender identity, race/ethnicity, use of assistive technologies, and disabilities such as blindness, deaf or hard of hearing, mobility impairments, and cognitive disabilities).

In this section, we are going to ask you for demographic information to ensure that we meet this inclusive criteria.

3. Demographic Information

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7. What is your age? ♀ o
O 18-24
O 25-34
O 35-44
O 45-54
O 55-64
O 65 and older
O Prefer not to say
8. How do you identify? Select all that apply as you are comfortable. $ Q$ o

Agender

Genderqueer, Two-Spirit, or non-binary

Man Man

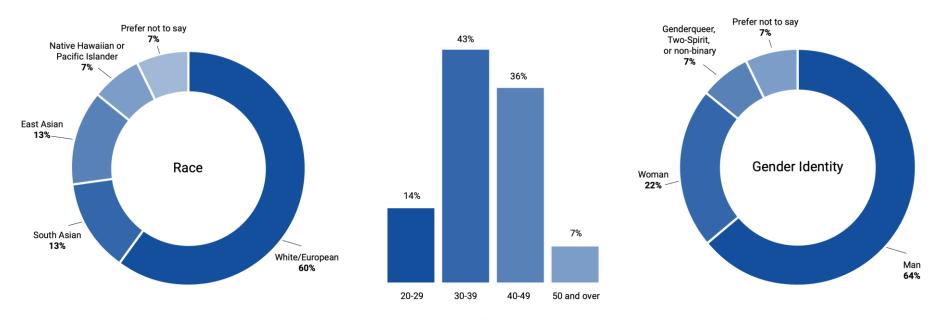
How did we get stakeholder buy in?

We walked our client through the screener:

- Opportunity to select more than one option (identity is complex!)
- Why this section was optional
- Meets client DEI initiatives, equity metrics
- More diverse user sample = more robust, inclusive results

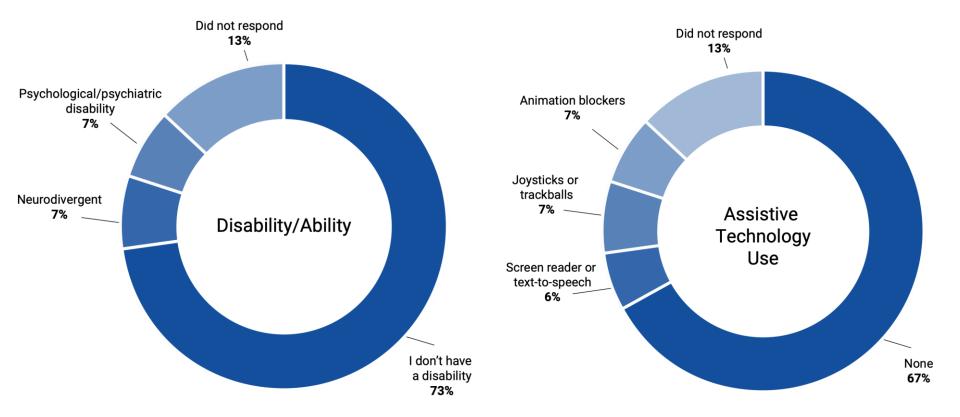


Our participants



Age

Our participants



The client saw this as a win!

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Compare usability test to accessibility review



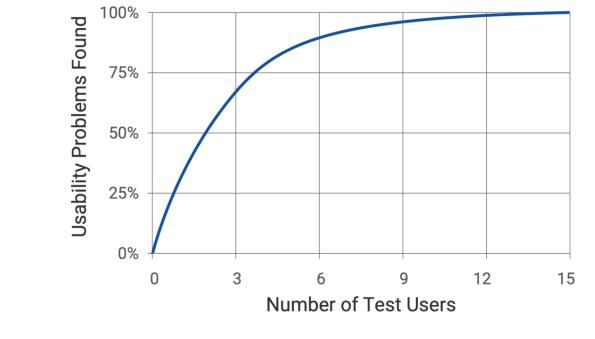
Virtual usability studies

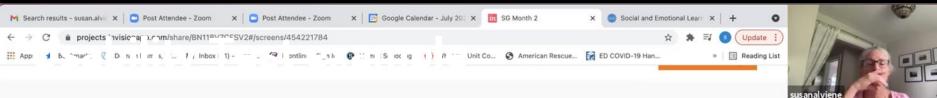
Study Overview

- 6-8 participants
- 1:1, 45-60 minute tests

Evaluation Protocol

- Orientation
- Behavior discussion
- Navigation testing
- Design impressions
- User tasks
- Additional insights





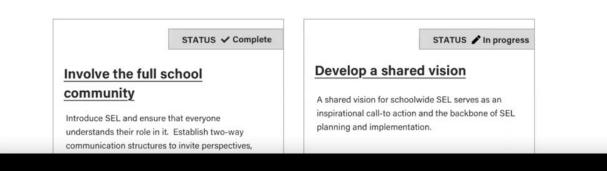
Get Started Today >

in. Made in InVision

✓ Complete	In progress 2 of 3 done			
MONTH 1	MONTHSN2-3	MONTHS 3-4	MONTHS 4-12	MONTHS 11-12

Month 2-3

Once you have an SEL team in place and you have developed your understanding of what schoolwide SEL looks like in practice, it is time to expand the conversation to the rest of the school community, including staff, students, parents and caregivers, and key community partners. Together you'll develop a shared vision of where you want to go with SEL, and ensure your team has a strong grasp of where SEL is already occurring and what has been tried in the past.



88

Delivered findings via actionable UX report

You would like to develop your skills in your current position. Find a learning opportunity that fits your

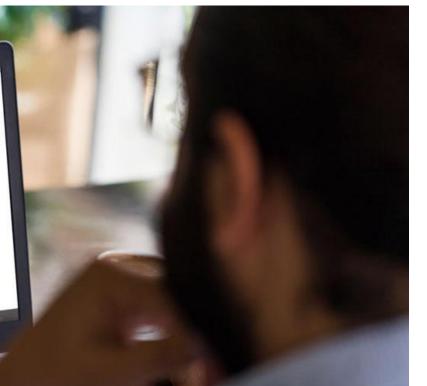
Percent Count 37.5% 3 12.5% Passed 1 Passed with difficulty 50%

Users most often chose "Learn by Solution" when they wanted to learn about a specific topic or solve a specific problem. They said this option was also useful when they weren't sure

what role they wanted or if none of the roles listed really applied to them. However, beginners said that they were too new to choose a solution, and wished there was an easier entry point. Users choose "Learn by Role" when they know what role they are interested in, and it is generally a future-oriented choice. Specifically, most users said they would choose "Learn by

Role" when they want to transition into a new job. However, many users noted that none of the roles really fit them. Additionally, beginners said that they were too new to choose a role, and 8.

Recommendations to address Insights 7 and 8: Create stronger links between learning by role and learning by solution by mapping solutions onto roles that typically search for those solutions.



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needs.

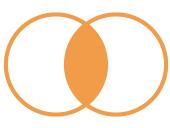
7.

Content Admin Training



Good UX is accessible UX

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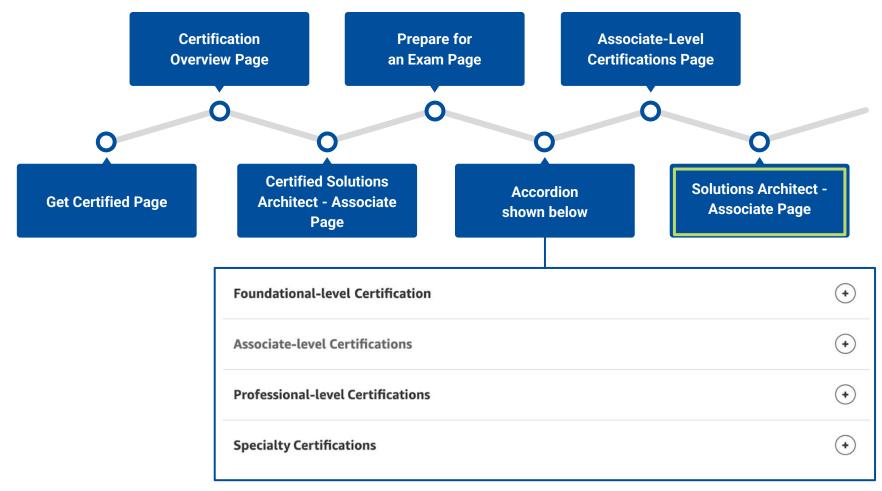
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Human review following automated audit Many of the top hits overlapped with usability concerns identified in our interviews Validated qualitative research



Users were frustrated they had to remember previous choices.





RECOMMENDATION

Close loops that move users from a specific selection to a more generic page that requires them to make the same selection again.

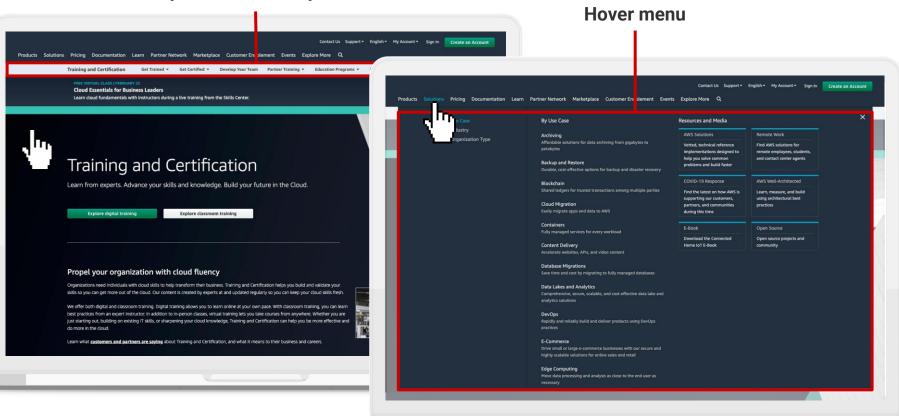




2. Users were frustrated when they unintentionally activated a hover menu.

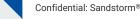


Secondary menu hidden by hover menu



RECOMMENDATION

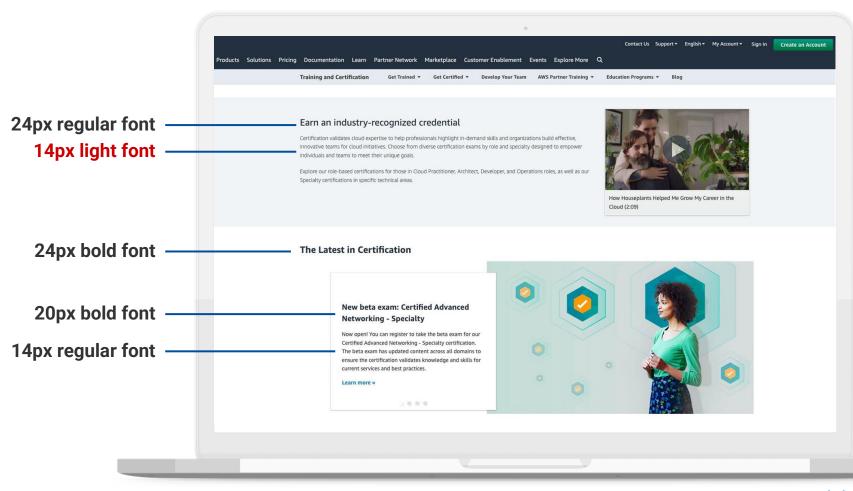
Implement a more streamlined click-to-expand menu.





3 Users wanted larger font sizes.





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RECOMMENDATION

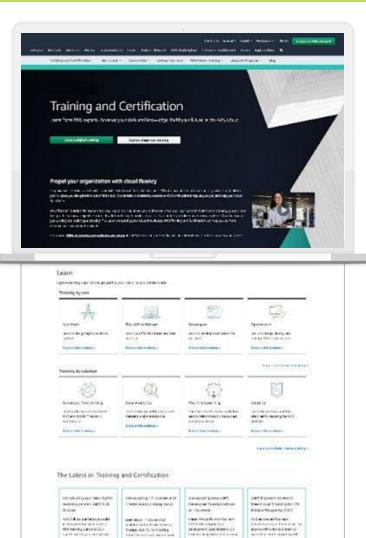
Increase the minimum font size to 16px and make the font a heavier weight.





4. Information on the homepage was overwhelming.





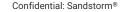




RECOMMENDATION

Cut the homepage length by 30%–50% and include only the items that were most important to users.



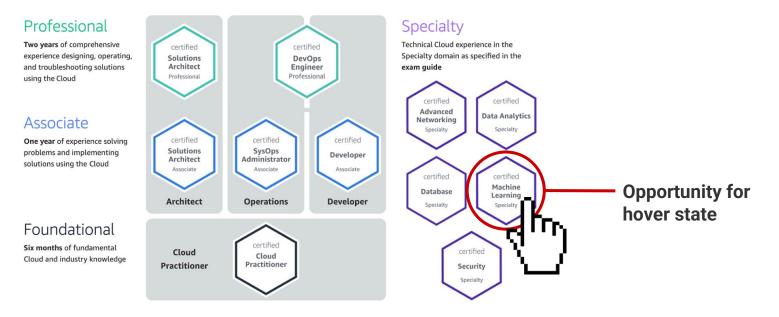


5. Users like infographics, but they need to communicate clickability.



Available Certifications

Select a certification badge below to learn more.







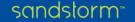
RECOMMENDATION

Ensure there are clear focus and hover states for each that don't rely on color alone.





6. People like to consume information in different ways.



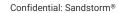
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Deliver solutions by using and deploying specialized cloud services







RECOMMENDATION

Include text, graphics, videos, and other content types that support each other.



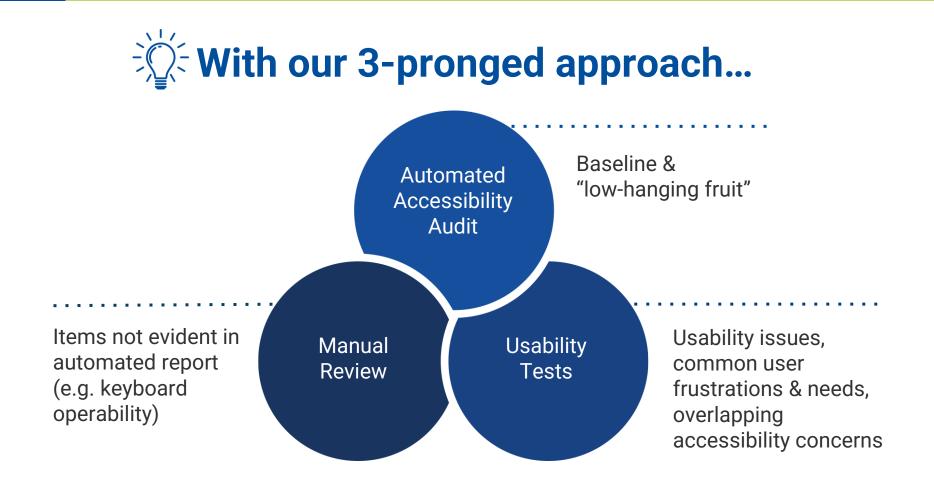


Things we didn't catch in usability tests that were caught by automated audit or manual review:

- Missing or low-quality alt text
- Improperly coded headings & subheadings
- Poor link text
- Color contrast ratios
- Keyboard operability
- Missing focus indicators
- Missing current states & breadcrumbs







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- Limited access to site backend
- Variety of teams/expertise
- Different levels of accessibility knowledge
- Varying levels of responsibilities across the site





Start with something tried and true

 ✓ Sandstorm
 Access Hour
 (internal team trainings)

 ✓ Previous client trainings Alt text

How do I write good alt text?

- If it's a group of images conveying one single meaning, like a group of stars for a rating system, provide alt text for the first image (e.g., Rating: 3.5 out of 5 stars) and leave the alt text empty for the rest
- Avoid jargon, or other kinds of priviles ed knowledge, except where it is essential for describing an object
 - If used, the jargon term should be explained



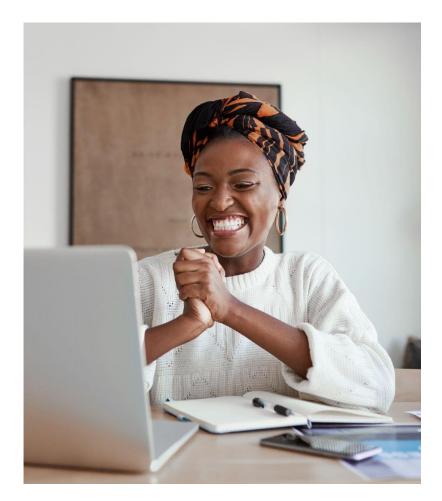


Our approach to training

- Setting the stage for a successful & accessible session
- Walking through definitions in the beginning
- Digestible content with added resources
- 60 minute workshops, not lectures
- Encouraging engagement and questions

Providing human experiences helped make the information stick

- Sharing real life perspectives sprinkled through the deck
- Beyond compliance how can we create a delightful UX for all?



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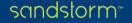
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KEY LEARNINGS

- 3-pronged approach was successful!
- It's easier than you think to include people with disabilities in your research
- Explaining *why* is just as important as *what*
- Even a small shift left is still a shift left



Good UX is accessible. Accessible UX is good.



Thank you! Let's Connect.

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Download presentation: <u>https://sandstormdesign.com/axe-con-2022</u>

