

Why Should I Worry About A Standards Compliant Website?

If you've never heard of standards compliance then you won't be aware of the issues which can occur if your website doesn't meet the standards. Here is a brief overview of the importance of standards compliance.

Introduction

Website compliance standards are provided by the W3C with the aim of establishing a desired level of website quality throughout the internet. By making as many websites as possible of this quality increases the usability and accessibility of information available on the internet.

Standards Compliance & Cross Browser Accessibility



If you aren't aware that different internet users access websites using different web browsers then this will be important information for you. Gone are the days when Internet Explorer was the only browser worth considering, as the number of Internet Explorer users has been steadily declining for the past decade. Early in 2009, Internet Explorer lost its title of most-used web browser for the first time since it gaining the title, with the open source Mozilla Firefox browser nudging over the 50% market share figure to become the new number one. (Source: W3Schools)

Different web browsers handle certain web code elements in different ways, which is why it's important to use a quality of code which will be correctly handled on as many different platforms as possible. This is where the W3C compliance standards come in, as they provide a benchmark for web code quality. By developing a website in keeping with these standards, the chances of handling errors is almost eradicated, meaning that more web users will be able to access your content when they arrive at your website.

Standards Compliance & WCAG

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) are the compliance standards which handle making web content accessible to users with impairments or disabilities. In the UK, this is commonly referred to as DDA Website Accessibility. There are three levels of these WCAG guidelines concerning accessibility, which are described by W3C as:

- **Priority 1 (Compliance Level A)** - A Web content developer must satisfy this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it impossible to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint is a basic requirement for some groups to be able to use Web documents.
- **Priority 2 (Compliance Level Double A)** - A Web content developer should satisfy this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will remove significant barriers to accessing Web documents.
- **Priority 3 (Compliance Level Triple A)** - A Web content developer may address this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it somewhat difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will improve access to Web documents.

It is widely acknowledged that Priority 2 (double A) is the expected level of compliance for UK websites.

Summary

Maintaining a standards compliant website should not be seen as an inconvenience, as the single biggest reason for it is making the website available to as many people as possible. This is obviously beneficial to the website owner as having more visitors access your content means you increase your opportunities to gain more clients and customers.