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Let's start with the good news. Every week I speak at the new hire orientation at Yahoo. An interesting thing happens every time I ask people if they have heard of or know anything about accessibility or usability, usually 70 percent of people raise their hands up and say yes. When I ask how they know about it, they say, "Well, there is section 508. We have to do it because our CEO told us to do so.." People have all kinds of reasons, but the good message here is that it's we're living in a better world in terms of awareness about accessibility than we did even 10 years ago when Yahoo was started. That's great news.

The bad news is that accessibility, and I attach the word usability to this as well, is a moving target, which means we may never absolutely live in a fully accessible world. The saying goes, you know, "let's make the world a better place." It doesn't say, "let's make it to the perfect place." Right? We have to do with a lot of new issue that nobody even thought about say 2 years ago. The introduction of web 2.0, which is a fancy term for the new services available, like using the drag and drop on the internet. You are able to compose your own Yahoo page or your own Google page whichever one you are using and so on and so forth. The model that we're trying to pull at Yahoo is very simple. Not many people realize that you are actually the people who are paying for the service. When you go to the sites you think they're free, right? Well, they're not. You are paying, not with your own money, but with the money of our advertisers, but you are the ones to whom we are directing our attention. This becomes a very important selling package when I talk to product managers and developers by saying that users with disabilities are the same users as everybody else. Particularly in the context of the internet, it's more apparent than ever; when you browse the internet we don't know if you're wearing a green T-shirt or if you're wearing glasses or if you are in a wheel chair. To an account provider, you're still the user. When you think about this is a business proposition, it does make much more sense than just saying, "Hey, let's go and ahead and bring this page and make it accessible or usable for people with disabilities." The argument is usually lost.

The other important thing that I want to discuss is that we have to be particular at my company. We have to think about how we can make accessibility or usability despite of being useful for our end user. How can we make it work for other services or for other features we're to leverage? One of the things we're often talking about is properly structured HTML or web pages are also great for search engine optimization. Now, search engine optimization is a very fancy term for some simple concept, and that means if we structure our page better, if we deliver a more structured content on the web pages, then it is easier for search engines to search it, and it's easier for search engine to give you better results when you search for that information.

The other interesting point that turned out to be a very successful proposition when we talked about it is closed captioning being a great enhancement for video search. Give me that close caption file, give me that transcript; I will put it in my search engine and when people type a phrase from a movie or show, it's going to tell them exactly what video it is and at what minute the certain phrase was spoken. When we combine these things together, such as close captioning and properly structured web pages, so many people's mouths drop at it. "Wow! This is so great." We didn't think putting those headings in the page makes it better, and not just a better page, but it actually makes search engines work better, and last but not the least, brings us more money.

I will quickly cover the challenges we are currently facing and then talk about a conclusion. The very first challenge is that accessibility is a moving target. The whole web is moving to new interfaces. We have new interactive models coming up, and it's very difficult for us to even understand how difficult it is to interact with these models. Many of you have seen writing widgets or these nice modules that we can drag and drop from the certain elements from the page just like you do on the desktop computer. That's the first challenge, and believe me it's not easy.

The second challenge is that assistive technologies, such as screen readers, screen magnifiers, voice recognition are not readily capable of handling new interfaces. We have that piece of that moving target again, where assistive technologies, as powerful as they

are now, are still not capable of providing us with solutions. When talking to developers, we may say, “Hey, you guys go ahead and create a successful page.” They ask us, “well can user with disabilities use this page with the best technology available?” Even if technology was up to date, we still have the problem of people in many lesser developed countries getting that new technology, because when the new version of JAWS or Window-Eyes, so they’ll say you can use the webpage but you have to upgrade, which can come at a high cost.

Another challenge that I also want to point out is that there is no ready technology to address the new model of user-generated content. Many of you here heard of Youtube., MySpace and Yahoo 360. All of these social web networks, but the problem that we are having is that there’s no technology that we can give to the end user and say, “Hey, you put this video up on the internet and I want you to caption it,” or “I want you to do something to make it accessible.” Users are not going to spend time on that if there is no incentive for them or if it is not easy. That becomes quite a big challenge.

The last challenge is that a lot of content we are getting, like Google or Yahoo, is not created by us. It’s a content that we receive from other services and we just serve it on our pages, and to that end, it is common responsibility for everyone to make their interfaces accessible, so that even if they serve it to other companies, they get accessible interfaces. We will get accessible content which we can give back to the end user.

In conclusion, which is as I mentioned before, we need to give the users the ability to interact with accessible or usable content. If they don’t have the proper technology, such as screen readers, single point switches, voice recognition software, there’s nothing that can make it easier for the industry or for the end user. Therefore, education and literacy are part of the package, and let the users drive the accessibility effort forward. Users need broadband access and technology and then they will take it into their hands and aside from becoming a mainstream member of the society, they will be able to make an influence on what companies can do and should not do.