My Digital Accessibility Journey

By Jacques Chappell

Blindly making my way…

I was struggling to find work with my current skills and had decided that I wanted to get into the field of accessibility.

I knew a couple of people that were already working in accessibility, I was confident I could do the same.

After talking to people in the field of accessibility, researching on my own, and with the help of my vocational rehabilitation counselor my goal was created.

But how to accomplish this goal? It was difficult to see a clear path forward, so I created these small steps….

1. Look for ways to learn and build my accessibility knowledge and skills.
2. Find work experience and or ways to practice my learned skills.
3. Obtain a job in accessibility.

Building my Deque University foundation

Upon discovering Deque University, which is a self guided online platform with courses in learning accessibility. I started a list of courses to work on, primarily focusing on these 3 key areas.

- Web accessibility
- Document accessibility
- Customer service for people with disabilities

I eventually completed all of the courses, quizzes, and programs that were offered.

This left me wondering, what to do next? This was a good start, but not enough to land a job in accessibility yet.

Digging into Digital Accessibility

After completing at the time the Deque University courses, and earning the certificates from Deque University, I had been working on researching my next steps in this journey of accessibility. When I was offered an opportunity to apply for a spot in a pilot program teaching digital accessibility.

This seemed like a good next step building on my Deque University course work. I applied, filling out the forms and going through the steps.

Then the day came, I was accepted into the digital accessibility analyst pilot program.

My world had gone from learning about accessibility to web accessibility, and now expanding it to the world of digital accessibility and all it entails.

I completed the course, and while there is no certificate for completing the course I did gain…

- Building my accessibility knowledge and skills
- Experience using the knowledge and skills in the real world
- Connections that are just as passionate about digital accessibility

Now, I had knowledge, basic skills, and several months of experience, but no job in accessibility.

Earning my certification in accessibility

Now with what I was hoping was enough knowledge and understanding of accessibility and disabilities I applied to take my CPACC exam, which stands for Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies.

I was able to receive a scholarship to take the CPACC exam.

With all my hard work, studying over the information for weeks prior to the exam date, and 3 hours of actual in seat exam time…

I passed the exam and earned my CPACC certification from the International Association of Accessibility Professionals.

The apprenticeship

Following shortly after earning my CPACC I was offered an opportunity to join a digital accessibility apprenticeship.

This seemed like the next step in the journey. I was finding out that having the certification in accessibility was not enough without the experience to go with it.

I have been working on building my digital accessibility skills and knowledge while putting those skills to practice with testing websites and documents. As well as completing competencies within the apprenticeship to exhibit or demonstrate my competency in various areas of the digital accessibility field.

The End!

Thank You!