

O2 FOCUSES ON ACCESSIBILITY FOR DISABLED, MOBILE AND SILVER SURFERS

Submitted by: 2therefore

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Web accessibility for the disabled, the elderly and mobile workers is high on O2's agenda as it partners with Segala M Test (Segala) to provide a web accessibility accreditation scheme.

Segala will now be responsible for validating O2's entire web based supplier products against the WAI* 'AA' guidelines by providing a branded logo which acts as a seal of approval for O2. Segala is also providing ongoing advice for the UK's market leader in mobile web products on mobile device accessibility.

"We wanted an accessible and compliant website that ultimately offers our customers a better experience," comments Dermot O'Mahony, Head of Portal Production at O2. "Over half of our customer base is online, and many need assistance to navigate our website effectively. This may be due to impaired sight in the case of the elderly, or due to a disability. Another important web community are those accessing the web from the array of new mobile devices."

"Having researched the market thoroughly, Segala was the obvious choice because the industry needs independent accreditation. Segala understands compliance and is very knowledgeable on the Disability Discrimination Act and WAI guidelines. An independent body is also a positive step for end users as it's working towards making the internet a more user-friendly medium - giving users more confidence to use it for activities such as shopping on-line."

Segala is currently one of only two World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) members in the UK to provide a web accessibility conformance validation service and is the only organisation in Ireland to provide such a service. The company is building an accessibility portal aimed at educating the UK and Irish markets on the importance of accessibility and the benefits that can be gained.

"There are 10 million disabled people in the UK with an annual spending power of £50 billion*," explains Paul Walsh, CEO and co-founder of Segala M Test. "O2 can extend its reach by providing a more accessible website which offers an improved user experience. To help them achieve this, we will work with all of O2's third parties and developers, enabling them to hand O2 fully tested and certified products which will speed up the process and add value to their own portfolio."

Segala is also the first specialist testing service provider worldwide to become an Associate member of the GSM Association - www.gsmworld.com and is instigating the first accessibility working group within the GSMA to ensure the mobile industry addresses the subject before devices and products become even more complex with the increasing number of technologies and languages.

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* Source – Scope - leading disability charity.

* <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) is part of the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) commitment to

lead the Web to its full potential includes promoting a high degree of usability for people with disabilities.

For more information, visit:

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