

The Blueprint for Hardware Auditing, Testing and the VPAT Certification

Digital accessibility is a non-negotiable imperative in this digital age. Adherence to accessibility laws like Section 508 holds true not only for software but extends significantly to hardware.

The terrain of [hardware accessibility testing](#) may sound vast and complex for many but not where you have a comprehensive blueprint with you. Let's demystify the process of auditing, testing and the VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template) Certification for hardware accessibility.



What is the significance of hardware accessibility audit?

Hardware accessibility audit means that devices must be designed and tested to ensure that they can be used by everyone. Regardless of physical or cognitive limitations of the users, the hardware should be developed in a way that everyone can enjoy barrier free access.

Compliance with accessibility standards, particularly Section 508, is mandatory for federal agencies. The VPAT is a documented assessment of a product's accessibility. It becomes a crucial tool for companies seeking contracts because the VPAT outlines the extent to which their hardware adheres to accessibility standards.

Blueprint for hardware VPAT testing

- 1. Initiation and Documentation Gathering:**

The process begins with a comprehensive understanding of the hardware specifications, including its features, functionalities, and intended use.

Next comes the documentation phase where technical manuals, user guides, and any information pertaining to accessibility features is collected.

2. **Audit and Evaluation:**

Precise measurements are taken to determine the optimal placement of the device. This ensures accessibility for individuals with mobility or dexterity disabilities.

Audit experts also conduct rigorous testing of the hardware interface to assess how individuals who are blind or have low vision interact.

Next comes the evaluation of pressure-sensitive controls to identify any potential issues for individuals with varying motor abilities.

3. **User Interaction Assessment:**

Assessors scrutinize user interfaces, controls and displays to guarantee usability. The controls should be tested by experienced auditors so that various facets of disabilities are covered such as motor, sensory, and cognitive disabilities.

Experience matters when it comes to hardware testing. Always go with a [trusted audit team](#) that gives special attention to user experience and test how individuals with disabilities interact with the hardware.

4. **Documentation Review:**

Assessors meticulously review technical documentation to ensure it includes clear and accurate information. The information gathered is used to prepare the VPAT. This document outlines the accessibility status of the hardware, highlights areas of strength, and suggests improvements where needed.

5. **Hardware VPAT Certification:**

A detailed report is generated in the form of VPAT with your choice of accessibility standards. The certification confirms legal compliance with accessibility standards and make the hardware ready for public use. The primary standards commonly used for VPAT certification in the context of hardware accessibility include:

- **Section 508:** VPATs often align with Section 508 standards to demonstrate compliance and accessibility features in hardware products.
- **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG):** WCAG has also become a reference for digital accessibility in various contexts. Some [hardware VPAT](#) may align with WCAG criteria, especially in areas related to user interfaces, controls, and displays.

- **EN 301 549 (European Accessibility Requirements for ICT Products and Services):** This European standard outlines accessibility requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) products and services.
- **ISO/IEC 40500 (ISO 40500 - W3C WCAG):** The ISO/IEC 40500 standard is the international equivalent of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- **ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Refresh:** The Access Board updated Section 508 standards with the "ICT Refresh," incorporating new guidelines for accessible hardware and technology.

6. **Ongoing Compliance and Updates:**

It is essential to conduct regular audits and assessments to ensure ongoing compliance. Any significant changes to the hardware or relevant accessibility guidelines necessitate immediate adjustments and recertification.

Conclusion

This blueprint for hardware auditing, testing, and VPAT certification serves as a guiding light for many organizations and individuals. Those who seek expert guidance can also get in touch with ADACP. It is a trusted name for accurate and thorough **hardware accessibility certification**.

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