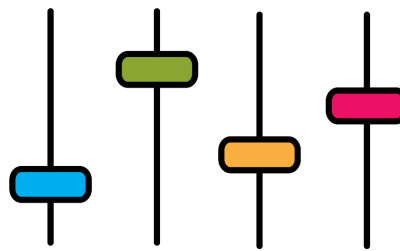


>> SLIDE 1

LEVEL

UP



BUILDING TOMORROW TOGETHER



**2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ON INDEPENDENT LIVING**

2025 Annual Conference on Independent Living

LEVEL UP: Building Tomorrow Together

Presented by the National Council on Independent Living

>> SLIDE 2: Title Slide

Accessible Marketing 101

Reaching Everyone, Every Time

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Susan Larsen

Susan Larsen Marketing, LLC

>> SLIDE 3: Meet Susan Larsen

- Founder, Susan Larsen Marketing, LLC
- 20+ years marketing experience. 5+ in accessible marketing.
- Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC) by the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP)



>> SLIDE 4: Meet the Presenter, cont'

- Founded Susan Larsen Marketing, LLC in 2020
- Clients include:
 - Centers for Independent Living (CILs)
 - Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs)
 - Other Disability Service Organizations
 - Businesses & Nonprofits



>> SLIDE 5: Services

- Contract marketing support for disability service organizations
- Consulting services to businesses and nonprofits
- Accessibility best practices in all digital communications
- 508/WCAG compliance for websites



>> SLIDE 6: Learning Objectives

Today's Goal

Empower your organization to integrate accessibility into your marketing channels.

What You'll Learn:

- What is Accessibility & Why It Matters
- Key Elements of Accessible Marketing
 - Intro to WCAG & Sec. 508
 - Contrast & Color
 - Font Size & Readability
 - Heading Syntax
 - Alt Text
- Practical Tools & Resources
- Q&A

>> SLIDE 7: What is Accessibility?

- Accessibility means designing content and tools so that everyone, including people with disabilities, can use and understand them.
- It's about removing barriers—not just adding accommodations later.

>> SLIDE 8: What is Accessibility? cont'

- Accessibility supports people with a range of needs:
 - Cognitive (e.g., memory, attention)
 - Sensory (e.g., vision, hearing)
 - Motor (e.g., limited mobility, dexterity)
 - Speech and communication
 - Invisible disabilities (e.g., chronic illness, neurodivergence)'

TIP: Accessibility improves usability for everyone - including older adults, people using mobile devices, or those in noisy environments.

>> SLIDE 9: The POUR Principles

- The 4 Core Principles of Accessibility (POUR):
 - **Perceivable:** Information must be presented in ways users can detect (e.g., alt text, captions).
 - **Operable:** Users must be able to navigate and interact (e.g., keyboard navigation).
 - **Understandable:** Content and interface should be clear and predictable.
 - **Robust:** Content must work across devices, platforms, and assistive technologies.

>> SLIDE 10: The POUR Principles cont'

- **POUR is the foundation of digital accessibility.**
- If your content meets these four standards, you're on the right track.
- Accessibility is not a one-time task. It's an ongoing process, and POUR helps guide that process.

>> SLIDE 11: Why Accessible Marketing Matters

- 1 in 4 U.S. adults (61 million people) identify as having a disability. ([CDC, 2020](#))
- Disability crosses all other demographic categories: race, gender, age, and income.
- Making your marketing accessible means it reaches more people.

>> SLIDE 12: Accessibility Boosts Visibility

- Accessible websites and alt text on images enhances SEO ([Google](#))
- Captions improve watch time and engagement of videos, signaling to algorithms that your content is valuable which improves reach.
 - *“Adding captions to your Facebook videos can increase view time by 12% on average.”* ([3PlayMedia, 2020](#))

>> SLIDE 13: Accessibility Boosts Visibility, cont'

- The more people who can access and engage with your content, the broader your potential audience and engagement pool.
- This indirectly supports better engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments), which feed the algorithms.
- **BOTTOM LINE:** Accessibility improves the conditions that lead to better performance.

>> SLIDE 14: The Legal Framework

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):
 - [Title II](#): Requires state/local governments to provide accessible communications
 - [Title III](#): Applies to “places of public accommodation,” which can include websites
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act:
 - Requires federal agencies and contractors to make all electronic communications accessible ([Section508.gov](#))
 - Covers websites, social media, PDFs, email, and more ([access-board.gov](#))

>> SLIDE 15: The Legal Framework, cont'

- Being out of compliance puts organizations at risk or lawsuits and complaints
- In 2023, over 4,600 federal website accessibility lawsuits were filed under the ADA—a number that has steadily increased year over year. ([UsableNet, 2023 ADA Digital Accessibility Lawsuit Report](#))
- Organizations offering services without accessible digital content may face legal risk or lose trust.

>> SLIDE 16: Where Accessibility Matters

- Websites & Digital Content
- Social Media
- Videos
- Emails / E-Newsletters
- Digital Documents (PDFs, Microsoft Documents)
- Print Materials

If it communicates a message, it should be accessible.

>> SLIDE 17: Website Accessibility Basics - WCAG & Section 508

- **WCAG:** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W3C)
 - Defines standards to make content Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust (POUR)
 - Latest version: [WCAG 2.2](#), released October 2023
- **Section 508:** U.S. law requiring accessible digital content for federal agencies and contractors
 - Uses WCAG as the technical standard for compliance
- **Resources:** [w3.org/WAI](https://www.w3.org/WAI) | [section508.gov](https://www.section508.gov)

>> SLIDE 18: Website Accessibility Basics - WCAG & Section 508 cont'

- If your organization receives federal funding (like most CILs), you are legally required to comply with Section 508.
- **PRO TIP:** When hiring a developer, be clear that your website must meet WCAG 2.2 standards to be 508 compliant.

>> SLIDE 19: Website Accessibility Basics – IMPORTANT WARNING!

- Accessibility overlays and plugins are not a substitute for proper compliance. True accessibility must be built into the website itself.
- These tools often fail to fix core accessibility issues and can interfere with screen readers & keyboard navigation
- Real accessibility comes from using proper code, design, and structure, paired with an accessibility statement

>> SLIDE 20: Contrast & Color

- Ensure a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1.
- Avoid relying solely on color to convey information.
- [WCAG Section on Color Contrast](#)

>> SLIDE 21: Contrast Ratio

THIS IS AN
EXAMPLE OF
POOR COLOR
CONTRAST

CONTRAST RATIO
1.41:1

THIS IS AN
EXAMPLE OF
GOOD COLOR
CONTRAST

CONTRAST RATIO
8.13:1

>> SLIDE 22: Avoid Reliance on Color Alone

Standard Vision

ERROR
ANNOUNCEMENT

Deuteranopia

ERROR
ANNOUNCEMENT

Best Practice

 **ERROR**
 **ANNOUNCEMENT**

>> SLIDE 23: Font Size & Readability

- Use a minimum font size of 12 to 14pt for body text
- Ensure sufficient line spacing (1.5x preferred)
- Choose readable fonts (sans-serif preferred)

>> SLIDE 24: Selecting Fonts

*This typeface is complex and
more difficult to read.*

This typeface is simpler and
easier to read.

C vs O

C vs O

e vs o

e vs o

I vs I vs I

I vs I vs 1

>> SLIDE 25: Heading Syntax

- Heading syntax refers to the structured use of headings (H1, H2, H3, etc.) to organize content
- These headings create a logical outline of your content for screen readers and search engines
- Not the same as bold or large font—they must be properly coded or tagged

>> SLIDE 26: Why Heading Structure Matters

- Helps screen reader users navigate quickly between sections
- Allows users to skim content efficiently
- Improves SEO and content indexing
- Ensures a consistent experience across devices and assistive tech

>> SLIDE 27: Heading Syntax Structure

- H1: Page title (**only 1 H1 tag per page)
- H2: Section heading
- H3: Subsection under H2

Rule: Skipping heading levels (e.g., H1 to H4) can confuse assistive technologies.

>> SLIDE 28: Heading Syntax - Example

H1: 2024 NCIL Annual Conference Program**

***Only one H1 per page. This is the main title.*

H2: Keynote Speakers

H3: Theo Braddy – Opening Remarks

H3: Judy Heumann Memorial Tribute

H2: Workshops & Sessions

H3: Accessible Marketing 101

H4: Presenter: Susan Larsen, CPACC

H3: Disability Policy Update

H3: Peer Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities

>> SLIDE 29: How to Apply Heading Syntax

- Use built-in heading styles, not just formatting
- In Word, PowerPoint, and Google Docs: use “Styles” panel
- In emails and e-newsletters: use platform settings
- In PDFs: use Adobe Acrobat’s accessibility tools
- In HTML: use actual `<h1>`, `<h2>`, etc. tags

>> SLIDE 30: Alt Text for Images

- Brief, descriptive text for images.
- Makes visual content accessible to users who can't see images, screen-reader users
- Improves SEO, context, and engagement
- Keep descriptions concise but meaningful.
- Avoid phrases like 'Image of' or "Picture of."
- Use tools like Microsoft Accessibility Checker

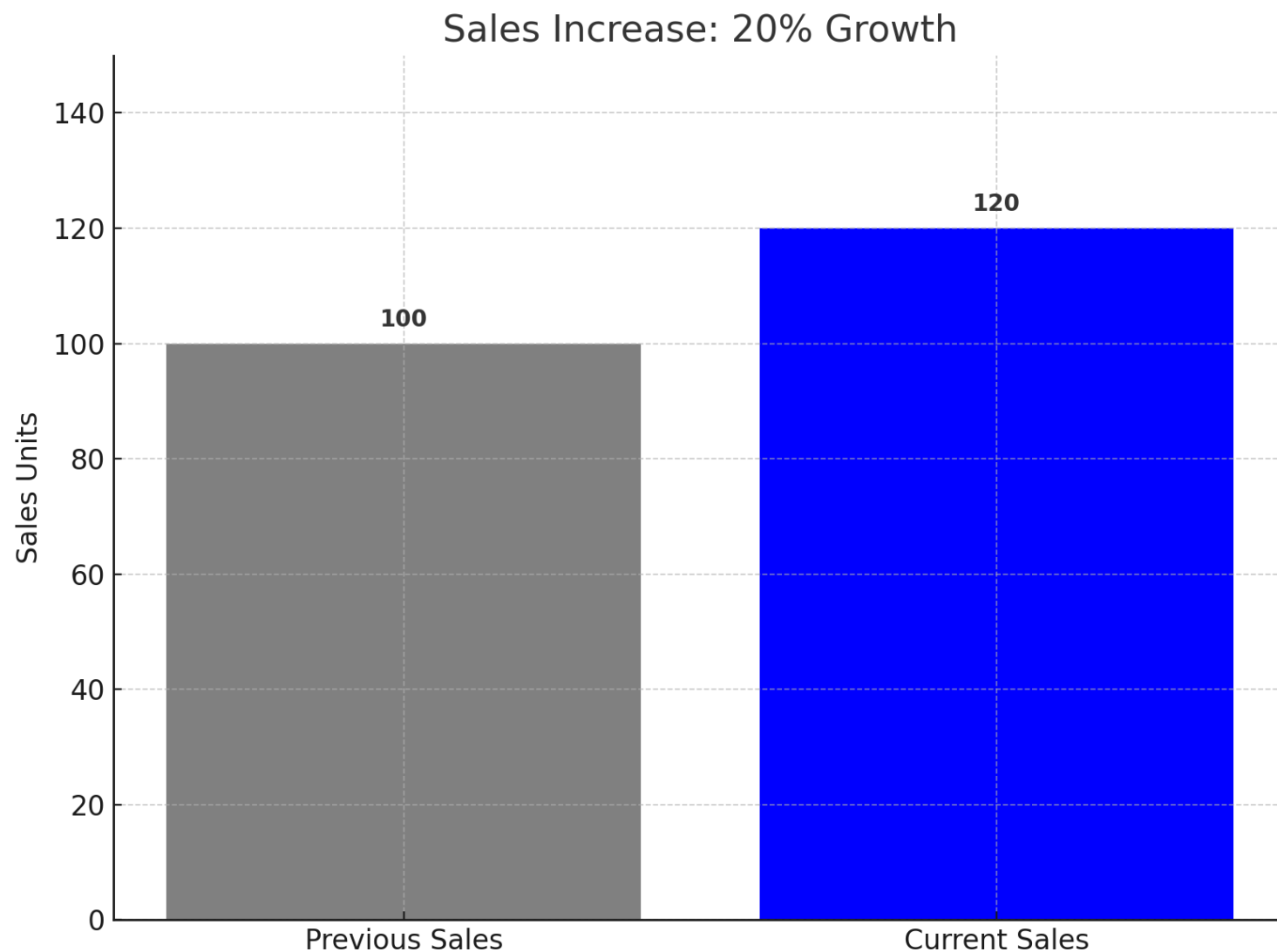


>> SLIDE 31: Writing Alt Text



1. Image of a dog.
2. A dog running in a field.
3. A golden retriever running in a field of green grass.

>> SLIDE 32: Alt Text for Data Visuals



Alt Text:

A bar graph showing a 20% increase in sales.

>> SLIDE 33: Decorative Images



Triangles are decorative elements.

Alt Text

How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind or low vision?

- The subject(s) in detail
- The setting
- The actions or interactions
- Other relevant information

(1-2 detailed sentences recommended)

Mark as decorative ⓘ

>> SLIDE 34: Alt-text - Context



“Cosmic Cliffs”

Source:
webbtelescope.org

>> SLIDE 35: Alt Text - Things to Keep in Mind

- Method to embed alt text and character limits vary by platform
- Don't over-focus on identity unless it's relevant to the content
- AI tools like ChatGPT can help write or refine alt text
- Tools to catch missing alt-text: WAVE, Microsoft/Adobe accessibility checkers

>> SLIDE 36: Practical Tools and Resources

- [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)
- [Microsoft Accessibility Checker](#)
- AI / Alt Text Generators (ChatGPT)
- [WCAG](#)
- [ADA National Network / US Access Board](#)
- State / Local Department of Disabilities
- [International Association of Accessibility Professionals \(IAAP\)](#)
- [NVDA](#) / [JAWS](#)

>> SLIDE 37: Thank You!



>> SLIDE 38

Questions?