ProcureEnsure Simple, Accessible Procurement

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:00:00.00] Slide, Allyant.

(SPEECH)

[00:00:01.85] Good afternoon or good morning everyone, I guess, based on where you're joining us from, because it could be morning it could be afternoon. I will give it a few seconds before we jump in and kick off our webinar today here, at Allyant. Few notes, even before folks joining, because I see people jumping on as we speak. We will provide a recording to the webinar. So if you have to jump early, if there's anything we talk about that would be beneficial to other team members, we will be distributing that to all the attendees shortly after the webinar. And then we will also be posting this, eventually, on our website as well.

[00:00:39.93] So no worries if you have to jump early, if you have other meetings. I know how webinars can go. I join a lot of them myself, and sometimes you have other conversations you have to jump for, and you miss something that you really wanted to see. So we will provide a recording to everybody after the fact, as well. But with that, I will jump right in. I'll give a brief introduction into Allyant and into our speakers today, so myself, and Aaron Page, as we go along. And then we will jump into this amazing topic, which is procurement accessibility.

[00:01:08.67] For starters, I think it's good to just give a 30,000 foot overview on who and who we are here at Allyant and what we do day in and day out. So to provide that overview, quite frankly, we are the one stop shop in the accessibility space. So we provide support for all forms of customer communication, here at Allyant. Whether that be digital accessibility, so websites, platforms, mobile applications, procurement, which we're talking about today, or digital documents, like PDF documents, Word, PowerPoint.

[00:01:37.14] And then, also, alternative formats. So printing in things like large flow reprint and Braille. We have an amazing team of 300 plus accessibility engineers located throughout the world. , And we'd be happy to help you with all forms of customer communication as it relates to accessibility, if those needs ever arise for your team.

[00:01:54.63] Jumping, then, into just a brief speaker introduction to myself and Aaron Page. I know this is always risky because he is one of the foremost experts in this space. But Aaron Page, I will let you talk first, and I'll preface that-- because it's baked into my DNA, because, we've known each other for so long I might call Aaron Page AP, because that's how I refer to him. So if you hear me say AP, I am teeing him up. But AP, go ahead. I'll let you provide an introduction to yourself.

[00:02:21.57] Awesome. Thank you, Ryan. Hi, everybody. It's nice to talk with you today. Thank you very much for joining us for this webinar.

[00:02:27.43] My name is Aaron Page. I am our Director of Accessibility, here At Allyant. In my role, I oversee our digital accessibility auditing team. So our teams that audit our websites, mobile applications, native desktop applications, that type of thing. I also head up our accessibility claims team, who provide litigation support services to our clients, in the event they might be targeted by an accessibility related lawsuit, demand letter, anything like that.

[00:02:52.89] I, myself, am blind. I actually was born with congenital glaucoma. I lost my remaining functional vision about 16 years ago now. Kind of crazy to think that it's been that long. I have been working in the digital accessibility space for the last 10 or so years, the last six of which have been with Allyant. When I first began my journey in the digital accessibility space, I began at the University of Montana, where my role largely focused on evaluating software and hardware that was under consideration for procurement, to evaluate its accessibility, as mandated by an Office of Civil Rights settlement agreement that the campus had.

[00:03:30.59] So, definitely, procurement accessibility is where I really got started in the space, so looking forward to talking with you all today. Back to you, Ryan.

[00:03:39.59] Yeah. Thank you, AP. And I think it's a perfect opportunity for us to bring your real life expertise into this topic, which is amazing and very helpful for all of our attendees. Yeah, a brief introduction into me and my role. My name is Ryan Whelan. I'm VP of Digital Accessibility Sales, here at Allyant. I have been here for a little over 6 and 1/2 years.

[00:04:00.45] I've been in the accessibility space for some time now, as Aaron kind of alluded to. We joined actually at a very similar time. So I've known AP for a very long time and work very closely with him every single day.

[00:04:11.25] Related to this topic, I am a member of the Disability and Accessibility Leadership Committee, which we will be talking about Disability:IN and specifically Procure Access, as that kind of drives some of the stuff that we're providing to our clients on the procurement front. So I'll bring some of that expertise into the conversation today.

[00:04:28.03] With that, I do always like to mention, on these webinars, feel free to reach out to Aaron or I. Connect with us on LinkedIn. We're always looking to grow our network of accessibility champions and professionals. And, look, I think if you're on this webinar or you're listening to this webinar, after the fact, I would consider you an accessibility champion. So we would love to connect with you on LinkedIn at any time, or reach out. If there's anything that we can help with, both of us are happy to speak with you at any time.

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[00:04:54.05] Slide.

(SPEECH)

[00:04:54.66] A couple housekeeping items, as I jump kind of into the agenda for the webinar today. If you have any questions, and I also have this on the later slides, or the final slides of the deck, that I'll be showing. But just in case you're not actually following along on the actual deck, or you're just not watching the screen you can reach us at any time at info@allyant.com. So if you have any questions out of today's session, if you'd like to chat with our team on procurement, or anything accessibility, you can reach out to us at info@allyant.com at any point in time.

[00:05:27.78] And as far as questions go, so Aaron and I will grab a few questions that are fed to me through the chat today. I know there's a private chat and a public chat. We'll do our best to monitor that. I'll do my best, as well, to answer some of them in real time. But regardless of whether we get to your question or not, a few promises from the Allyant side and, specifically, AP and I, we will follow up with everyone who we can see your name. So if you're anonymous, it becomes a little harder. But if we see your question and see your name, we will follow up with an answer shortly after the webinar.

[00:06:00.32] And then like I said, we'll do our best to track the chat and answer a few questions in real time as well. Additionally, if we don't get to your question or if you want to have a further conversation on any of the topics today, or how you can drive procurement, or any, just broadly on this topic, again, reach out on our website, allyant.com or info@allyant.com. We'd be happy to grab time with you and dive deeper into any of these topics.

[00:06:23.10] As for the agenda for the webinar today, so we're going to be talking all things accessible procurement. We'll start with I like to say what built this process, and talk track here at Allyant, and that is Disability and Procure Access Program. I'll talk about that on the next slide, actually, where Procure Access comes from, or what the goal of Procure Access is through disability and that amazing organization.

[00:06:46.12] From there, we'll drive into why is accessibility testing critical to your procurement processes. And then from there, how can you alter those processes, or how can you build awareness internally on this kind of new topic? But I would say it's a very timely topic, as we'll get to in a few slides from now. And then we'll wrap it up with one of the new services that we have, and that is our Free Procure Insure offering. And really detail where Procure Insure comes from, what it is, how AP's team supports organizations on that front. And then, ultimately, how your team can begin to leverage that, near immediately.

[00:07:21.28] So we'll get to a broad range of procurement accessibility topics as we go through today. And, like I said, if there's anything we don't get to, if there's anything we miss, or if there's anything that we could dive deeper into with your team, obviously, reach out at any time. We'd be happy to have a further conversation on this topic, or any accessibility topic, quite frankly.

[00:07:39.12] Driving then into Procure Access and Disability:IN's Procure Access Program, more specifically. If you are not aware of Disability:IN IN or what they do as an organization, I would strongly recommend jumping out to their website, reading through some of the amazing work that they're doing to

drive DEI inclusion and disability awareness, quite frankly. The Procure Access program is something that is very near and dear to me, as a member of the Disability:IN Accessibility Leadership Committee. But, also, it really helps drive some of the thought process that we have on ProcureEnsure here at Allyant.

[00:08:13.01] So we wanted to call this out. Largely, because you'll hear us reference it as we go through the conversation today. But also because we are a corporate member of disability and we are strong supporters and proponents of the amazing work that they're doing. Specifically, the Procure Access Program. So what Procure Access is it recognizes the importance of buying accessible technology.

[00:08:33.05] I like to think Disability:IN was a little bit ahead of the curve, with building out this amazing Procure Access program, as we'll get to, because we've had some recent, very recent legislation, releases from federal agencies, and then also some legal and litigation stuff, that Aaron and I are seeing on the front lines, that relate to procuring accessible technology or the risk related to not procuring accessible technology.

[00:08:56.93] So, ultimately, what Procure Access can help your organization do is they have a Procure Access toolkit, it's actually called. And they can help with contract language. That includes accessibility requirements that you can build into your standard procurement process or your standard service agreements, MSAs, et cetera. We'll also getting into some questions you can include in your standard procurement packets. And AP and I will get to some of that today, some of our recommended questions, of what we recommend organizations ask, at minimum, at a baseline level.

[00:09:27.61] But, ultimately, what they're really doing and helping build awareness on at Disability:IN through Procure Access, is bringing that awareness to the front of the buying process. And we're really trying to promote that and support that organization through our ProcureEnsure service. So, like I said, I would strongly recommend, if you're not aware of Disability:IN, follow them on LinkedIn, visit their website. They have a lot of amazing team members, and they're doing really amazing work.

[00:09:50.01] They also have a global conference coming up in July, and I think the early registration period is still open. So I went last year for the first time, and I would strongly recommend everybody attend, if that's of interest to you. So definitely check that out.

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[00:10:02.94] Slide.

(SPEECH)
[00:10:03.41] Then driving into what are we talking about today? What is procurement accessibility? So at a really baseline level, let's sort of tee this up, and that is ensuring digital products and software that you purchase, as an organization, ultimately are accessible. And that can include a number of things. This is a long list of third party products and software that might interface with your consumers. And, also, all of your employee facing systems.

[00:10:32.43] So when we think about the world that Aaron and I live in, so doing a lot of websites audits, mobile application audits, platform audits, things that are as simple as chat bots, loan calculators, if you're using a third party plugin for your form fields. Or really complex things, right? You're in higher education, and you deploy a learning management system to, well, higher education or K through 12, quite frankly. You deploy a learning management system to your students, and they're required to go through that to obtain education information, class information, et cetera. If that student has a disability, it's critical that is accessible.

[00:11:08.37] Employee HR software. Really, it runs the full gamut. But with that, AP, I'll turn it to you and kind of ask your perspective on both-- anything I didn't talk about, the types of third parties that we see, or really pulling on your experience in this space, and your background in this space, on what does procurement accessibility mean to you and why is this important.

[00:11:31.33] Yeah. Thank you, Ryan. I completely agree. The importance of procurement accessibility, it just, it really can't be understated. It's really getting out ahead of-- on the question of accessibility, rather than waiting until your hands are really tied and you're essentially forced into the situation. As you speak through these, one point that really jumps out at me is around employee software. There is always a natural tendency in the accessibility space to prioritize. Which makes sense because nobody has unlimited resources.

[00:12:04.65] And when you're being proactive about it, you have a bit more of that flexibility to prioritize the things with the greatest impact, your public facing sites, the things that are used by your students, first and foremost. Rather than if you wait until you end up in a situation where now you've received a civil rights complaint or now you've been targeted by an accessibility related lawsuit and now you have a settlement agreement in place. Once that happens, that flexibility evaporates and now everything, everything just has to meet an artificial deadline.

[00:12:36.31] And it's a lot more difficult. From a practical standpoint, to get to where you need to be once you're in that situation. So by being proactive, you can really get out ahead of this and give yourself the space to prioritize the things that have the greatest impact first, and kind of work your way up from there. But, oftentimes, the typical business might focus on let's make sure that the customer portal is accessible and the products that the customers are using are accessible.

[00:13:03.79] And they aren't thinking about, well, what about the payroll software that our employees are logging into. That might be a much smaller group but they have just as much a right to accessible software as anybody else. And when it comes to third party software, I will definitely say my personal opinion is it truly feels like a loophole in the law, the notion that if you purchase a piece of a software and that software ends up being inaccessible, you are liable for the accessibility of it.

[00:13:32.23] There is no onus on the vendor of that software to sell you a product that is accessible or to disclose this information proactively. And so third party software that is being used on a site or within an organization is very often targeted for that very specific reason. And one example that we've seen is a

third party, I won't name the name on this webinar here, size guide product that is very often used on e-commerce websites. And over the course of the last three months, we have seen this one particular third party size guide, its name come up in lawsuits and demand letters, kind of time and time again.

[00:14:10.03] And so the liability that comes along with the inaccessible third party software really can't be understated. And by getting out ahead of it, you can really prioritize, be flexible, plan things out, as opposed to waiting until you are now under a settlement agreement, that type of thing.

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[00:14:25.94] Slide.

(SPEECH)
[00:14:26.77] Ryan, back to you.

[00:14:27.79] Yeah, and that was a perfect segue, AP. I actually switched slides as you were talking, because you led directly into the next slide, which is awesome. And that is why is this important? And as AP just explained so perfectly, it requires your third party vendors to prioritize accessibility. As Aaron said, there is no-- they're not required to disclose that either they don't even know what accessibility is or that they're not accessible. It kind of falls on you, unfortunately.

[00:14:53.24] And so I think the biggest thing and the biggest impact that Procure Access has, and really some of the work that we're doing through ProcureEnsure, which we'll get into in greater detail later in the webinar, is it helps you move that conversation up in that buying process. As AP said, you buy something, you deploy it, you get a demand letter because that third party is not accessible. But you didn't know that on the front end. And there was no awareness to that.

[00:15:17.60] So I think just building out even streamlined procurement processes that move this up into that buying process, and allow your team to know before you buy, on what is the legal risk, or, at minimum, document that legal risk and have that conversation with that vendor. So as I alluded to and talked about, you can build in specific contract language. And then Procure Access toolkit has some really great examples and resources on that front.

[00:15:41.56] But, ultimately, as AP said, finding out post-deployment is much more costly. Not only in the sense of a demand letter in a lawsuit, but you deploy something, even like you said, an employee HR software, and then you have an employee with a disability that can't access that software, that buying process and that implementation process, it's costly. It's very costly, as many of you know.

[00:16:04.12] So then scrapping that, and starting over, that has real, inherent business costs, that, in many ways, could have been avoided, or at least thought about on the front end of that buying process. And then as AP said, I think, this is, it's ironic how we scheduled this webinar internally a few months ago, and how many things I've seen happen in this space since then, that make this very, very timely today.

[00:16:25.84] I think one is the Office of Management and Budget. If you're certainly in government, I'm sure you're aware of this. But they provided an update and a section 508 release in December of 2023, so about two months ago now. Because I think it was right around December 20th they released this. And they had a big section in that release, which we have a blog and an article on our website recently that I'd highly recommend checking out, specifically if you're in the 508 space.

[00:16:51.78] And one of the big things they talked about was procuring accessible technology and the importance of this. So we have that release, that just talked about the importance of the federal level, of not only ensuring that you're bringing this into that procurement process, but that those vendors are thinking about it as well. We have HB21 in Colorado, the state accessibility law and a big challenge.

[00:17:14.15] And we're having a lot of these conversations every single day with Colorado municipalities and state agencies, is HB21 pretty explicitly calls out that anything you deploy, any product, software, technology, you deploy to constituents or just consumers that visit your digital properties and need them, they have to be accessible. So at the government level, there's a significant amount of third parties that are pretty critical systems, whether it's even logging into look at your tax bills or your tax documentation, or various things like that.

[00:17:45.43] So we have that bill sort of, with that deadline pressing down, as July one of this year. And then as AP said, we have seen a significant trend over the past, keep me honest, I would say the past three to four or five months, even now, of demand letters and lawsuits being filed under Title III of the ADA that are calling out these third parties on e-commerce sites and specifically saying that was the blocking access. In fact, I just saw a settlement agreement from one of the high volume plaintiffs yesterday against an e-commerce brand, and it specifically required them to do third party testing of software.

[00:18:19.00] So, again, how timely was this webinar that we're doing today. But anything else to add, specifically on the legal front, AP, and how, at least doing some level of testing and just building that documentation through our ProcureEnsure service, that we'll get into, can be highly beneficial. It's versus doing nothing and just avoiding the topic.

[00:18:40.47] Yeah, no, I completely agree with you, with the increased trend that we're seeing here. And I think kind of an interesting note around that, is that it never explicitly calls out you are using x third party to create your size guide modal, or to insert your payment fields. Instead, the way that these complaints will work, is they often will say, the size guide modal on your product pages is not accessible. Because they aren't going to mention even the fact that it's third party. It's yours. That is how it's often treated as.

[00:19:15.51] And so when you look at these from the actual complaints, they don't ever indicate that it's third party. And so it would be incumbent on you, as the recipient of the complaint, you could respond and say, well, this is third party. It's outside of our control. But what kind of defense that provides you is certainly debatable. And that's the type of thing you would obviously want to discuss with your legal counsel. But from our experience, not a lot.

[00:19:41.01] And so, really, it does behoove you to get out ahead of this and ensure that any software, even more so if it's going to be public facing, or integral to the core user experience. So if you are an e-commerce site and consumers are coming to your site to purchase clothing, accessing the size information of products is absolutely a core piece of functionality. Versus maybe you have a social media feed located towards the bottom of your homepage. Yeah, I mean, that should be accessible, but we have to be realistic.

[00:20:13.92] And prioritization is important, as long as you've gotten out ahead of this and you have the ability to prioritize, and you can focus on those third parties' content and applications that are really integral to the core user path. So like that size guide modal or if you were using a third party payment platform in your checkout flow, making sure that those are accessible, so users are able to perform that kind of core function of coming to your site, reading about products, choosing the right product, and purchasing the product.

[00:20:41.25] And then if it's a other type of site, a brochure site, what is the main point of your site? What are the third party tools and applications that users are going to have to make their way through in the process of actually doing that, is a really important way to think about it.

[00:20:56.53] Yeah, I think that, spot on, AP. And we did get, we got a question that I think is pretty timely. So before I flip to the next part of the webinar, I think we should answer this one. And that is does Allyant have a list of accessible third parties? And I this is a fantastic question, and here's why. I think in some scenarios, we do, right, for organizations that are directly engaging with us to perform live user testing and auditing, and having us provide usability testing and third party VPATs on their software.

[00:21:26.01] I pick on Olark chat. I know the Olark team very well. We use their chat on our website. It is highly accessible because we worked directly with them.

[00:21:33.82] But I think it's also the Wild West. I think we see so many third parties, and this is kind of the-- it lends into the spirit of procuring and reviewing those third parties. Because I think the other part of it is accessibility and technology changes so quickly. We might have looked at something 18 months ago, as part of a customer audit, and that might be totally irrelevant to how the product is acting today.

[00:21:53.67] So any thoughts on that, AP? I think it's one where reach out to us. We'll get into the spirit of ProcureEnsure through the webinar. But I want to get your thoughts on that question.

[00:22:01.54] No, you pretty much nailed all the points that I was going to point out. In some instances, it obviously depends on what the particular functionality it is that you are looking for. But like the Olark chat is exactly the example that came to my mind as well. If you were to come to us and ask, do you have a third party chat solution that you recommend? Olark would be our answer.

[00:22:20.83] There are potentially some other examples of that. We don't have any kind of a comprehensive list that we keep online. Primarily, to the point that Ryan just made, technology changes so quickly. And we'll talk about this again when we get to VPATs. But if you conducted an accessibility audit or review, you have a VPAT or some other accessibility conformance report that comes from 12, 18 months ago, how useful is that, when you think of the rate at which technology changes.

[00:22:48.43] At that point, an assessment 12, 18 months ago that says, yeah, this is accessible at the time, might be completely irrelevant. Maybe a whole new version, a new interface has come out. And so the timeliness and the ease of maintaining that type of information is definitely a difficult one.

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[00:23:05.69] Slide.

(SPEECH)
[00:23:06.84] Yeah. No, I totally agree. So. That's perfect I wanted to cover that one because we were talking a little bit about third parties on that slide. So, no, great, great question and great place to drop that in.

[00:23:18.39] Then moving on to some of the challenges that we see teams face on this topic. And then I think we'll get into some of our strategies and best practices for building accessibility into your procurement processes. But I always think it's good to talk about the front lines experience that we have in talking with a lot of teams on procurement and ProcureEnsure and Procure Access to the disability community.

[00:23:41.29] And I think there are a few trends that I have certainly seen over the last, really, I would say, 8 to 12 months, being focused on this topic. And the number one thing is your procurement team is likely not trained in accessibility. And I would argue, that's not really their job. We shouldn't expect a procurement team to be able to perform testing on their own or know if a product or a software that marketing or IT, or people service is looking to procure as accessible.

[00:24:07.45] And, quite frankly, many times, they don't even know what questions to ask the vendor. They're not accessibility champions, SMEs, experts. And I think that's one of the biggest challenges that teams face, from a procurement perspective, is procurement kind of gets put in a vacuum. Accessibility is important to us, and we can even build in Procure Access. But if you're not doing the testing on those products and really supporting the procurement team through that, I think you still have a big risk of procuring inaccessible technology. AP anything to add to that point, and then I'll go into a few others.

[00:24:40.48] No, I think you're absolutely right. The trick is that you simply can't expect or anticipate your procurement team to be accessibility experts. It really is important to provide them with the resources that they need up front to be able to help ensure that they are procuring accessible software. Things like we had talked about already, a bit. The contract language, what questions to ask, what type of documents to

ask. Where can they go to get access to that live user testing that really is essential to ensuring that you are performing or procuring accessible software.

[00:25:10.83] Because in the end, you can never take a vendor at their word, when they say something is accessible. And so these are all really important to help support your procurement team in procuring accessible software.

[00:25:21.47] Yeah. I think the next one, and this one, I'll largely tee this up for you, AP, because you have so much direct experience from your time at the university on this front. And that is tight timelines in the procurement process. You whittle down that vendor list to three, and you have an RFP out there. And, look, we answer a lot of RFPs. Sometimes they're two weeks long.

[00:25:41.84] And so you have these really tight timelines for procuring software technology. And one of the biggest challenges I hear from the procurement side of things is we have an internal accessibility team. But, look, AP and I can speak to this and until we're blue in the face, quite frankly, a lot of times accessibility teams, we feel are understaffed. And they have a million things on their plate.

[00:26:04.10] And what I hear from procurement teams is we don't have the time to wait for our internal accessibility team. We can't wait six, eight, 12 weeks for them to test a product because they're too busy. So then we had good intentions. We asked some questions about accessibility. But we didn't have time to test it. And so AP, I'll tee this one up to you, because I think you have so much direct experience on the challenges of the timelines that procurement teams face when looking to procure accessible technology.

[00:26:29.40] Yeah. This is something that I certainly lived, back when I worked at the University, of Montana before I came to Allyant. And in my role there, I was the one and only person for the entire campus, which at the time, consisted of about 12,000 students. I was the one and only person they had responsible for procuring any software that was considered for purchase. And then in select instances, we also had to test hardware as well.

[00:26:57.16] And so this problem about timelines was a huge issue because we had a never ending queue, eventually, because we were mandated by a settlement agreement. We actually place, put restrictions in place in things like the tool that staff would use to actually purchase software, where it actually would put a hold on the purchase, pending accessibility review. And then it would come to us and sit in our queue until, I, the one and only person who could do the actual user testing, and our one and only person we had who was reviewing VPATs, could actually go in and take a look at it.

[00:27:34.30] And so this created exactly like you said in this bullet here. I think for us, at one point, we were talking 6 to eight weeks turnaround time for us to be able to get back to some of these requests. And we've all kind of experienced this in our professional lives. If something is being requested, particularly by a senior stakeholder in an education environment, if something is coming from the university president's office or the provost office, or it's coming from the dean of one of the big colleges on campus, there's a lot of internal pressure to make that happen and to make that happen quickly.

[00:28:09.55] And so when you end up with this long wait, you also end up with a lot of internal pressure to, essentially, bypass the accessibility process. And so having a long waiting list can really be detrimental because in the end, it will increase the perception that accessibility is just this kind of unnecessary red tape barrier to being able to get things done, and people will seek to bypass it when it takes that type of time to make it happen.

[00:28:37.36] Yeah. I think that's a perfect segue, AP, the final bullet. That I would say we've both been at this long enough. I wouldn't even say this is just a procurement thing. But I do hear this, right, more from the vendor side, when we start when we try to help organizations and clients with procurement accessibility, and that is this big misconception that prioritizing accessibility will sacrifice product features.

[00:29:00.85] Well, you know, and I hear it all the time, of, well, we won't be able to buy this because the procurement assessment said it's not accessible. I think quite the opposite. I think that at the heart of this, as we'll get into with ProcureEnsure, and bringing in that conversation, it's not about always finding a perfect technology or sacrificing product features. I think, at a baseline, because I think many times it's really, really critical to walk before you run, specifically when we think about procurement accessibility, or just accessibility journeys, in general.

[00:29:31.42] But I think having this awareness and then being able to have those conversations with the vendor, this doesn't mean you can't buy something. There's always going to be those scenarios where there might not be a great option. But at least we've sort of had that conversation with the vendor. We can start to set realistic milestones, where they can build accessibility into products.

[00:29:48.98] But I want to hear your thoughts on this, AP. Obviously, as an assistive technology user and having done so much work in this space, I think there's a big misconception that the accessibility team is going to sacrifice product features or make a product look ugly to everybody else. I hear that all the time.

[00:30:04.43] Yeah. Definitely when it comes to the point of making it look ugly, absolutely not. Good design and accessibility go hand in hand. Good UX and accessibility go hand in hand. So if your design is ugly, awkward, clunky, difficult to get around, that is actually going to be a negative impact on accessibility as well.

[00:30:25.97] But I completely agree. There are scenarios where there is-- I mean, let's be real. There is just no such thing as a 100% accessible product. There is no such thing as a 100% accessible piece of software, a 100% accessible website, 100% accessible native mobile application. There's just not.

[00:30:43.91] These things always update. They always change. Their features are so dense. Many of these have been around for so long. If your goal is to let me find something that is perfect, that is 100% accessible, you're never going to find it, right. So you have to be a lot more realistic. And especially when you get into certain fields or certain types of software, there really is not likely to be an accessible alternative to that.

[00:31:10.91] Think of software that you might use to remotely pilot a drone. How is that software going to be accessible to somebody like myself, who is blind. You might be able to make sure that software is accessible to somebody who has a motor dexterity disability. Design the interface really well so that users who have high color contrast needs can use it. But there's going to fundamentally be some users who are going to likely be unable to use that software, just by the nature of it.

[00:31:38.25] And so, yes, it's great to do your due diligence and figure out which one is the most accessible out of the available options. But then also recognize there might not be a great answer. And, oftentimes, what helps you in that case is some of the other items that have been talked about here. Maintaining your good documentation about what you did to vet it for accessibility. If they gave you an ACR or a VPAT, hanging on to that.

[00:32:04.94] Making sure that you have plans for users who might be impacted by the accessibility of that software, to be able to get around it. Getting contract language in place to help protect you, in the event you are targeted by an accessibility related lawsuit or demand letter, caused by that software. Potentially trying to get indemnification, so that vendor covers you, in the event their software is the reason why you are being sued.

[00:32:29.81] There are plenty of things that you can do to help protect yourself, help plan ahead. Even in the event, I wouldn't say very likely, but quite possible event, that there is no great option. And so in the event that is the case, there are these other things that you can do to really help protect yourself when it comes to procurement accessibility.

[00:32:49.30] No, I think that was a perfect answer and amazing insight, AP. Because I just think that's a pretty common theme that I think I think we hear on the front lines and one of the challenges that I think procurement teams feel, maybe a fear with bringing accessibility into the conversation. I think you just articulated that so perfectly. So I certainly appreciate that.

[00:33:08.89] Then jumping into, now that we've kind of framed up what are the challenges that teams have and what is procurement accessibility, really diving into some of our best practices in building accessibility into your procurement processes. This is one that's near and dear to me, and I think will fall a little bit outside of just procurement accessibility. But I think it's so directly relates. And that is building general accessibility awareness.

[00:33:34.21] I think whether we're talking about procurement accessibility or building accessible websites and customer portals and consumer facing products on your broader accessibility journey, accessibility needs to be discussed organizational wide. And I think one of the biggest things that can really organically build internal champions is hosting a company wide immersion training. Bringing in someone like Aaron, and I'll hand it to him in a second to talk about this, that can do a screen reader demo.

[00:34:02.75] Really building buy in and ownership from the top, down of the need and awareness for accessibility. AP, anything to add on that front? Because I think we do a lot of these together. And I think teams just seeing someone operate a native screen reader on their website or on something they built or on their product, it just builds such strong buy in across the general, just consensus of accessibility. And I think that lends so perfectly into building buy in on procurement accessibility as well.

[00:34:33.95] Yeah. I completely agree. One of the things that I realized very quickly when I first started working in the digital accessibility space, was how eye opening it was for anybody who is not a native screen reader user, who isn't experienced in the assistive technology field, doesn't know about this, how illuminating it is for them when they actually see the assistive technologies in action.

[00:34:57.75] And so back when I was at the university, anytime I conducted any kind of a workshop or training, it absolutely, every single time, included a screen reader demonstration. And whatever I was doing in that presentation, I would actually allow the audience to hear my screen reader reading that content out. And that tends to be just so very eye opening and creates such great awareness, by that one simple act of just demonstrating, this is what it's like if you give me an inaccessible PDF document.

[00:35:29.46] This is what it's like right now, if I try to go register for a class in an inaccessible student information system. Actually seeing the impacts of accessible and inaccessible content, both. Because it's always good to demonstrate like here's what it's good, here's when it's bad. Really is just eye

[00:35:45.42] Opening. And another point I will mention is the point about getting the sea level buy in, or the leadership buy in. I just can't underscore how important that is. And it's funny because when think of this bullet, I actually recall back when I was at the university. It took a while, but eventually we actually got ourselves a meeting with the university president and his cabinet, there. And in that meeting, in that presentation, we talked about just accessibility in general. And we included an actual screen reader demo during that.

[00:36:16.63] And I will definitely say, after that, it did seem like we had better support from the university president's office when it came to accessibility. I actually remember running into him a few times on campus, and he remembered me and said hi. Those types of things. It just creates such better awareness, when the leadership can see the practical impacts of this. And that will help you in so many ways, further on down the line.

[00:36:40.41] Yeah, what a perfect sort of real life example, AP, on that front. But I totally agree with you. And I think it's, again, I wanted to include this sort of topic in this slide because I think anytime we're talking about accessibility, it really comes down to-- and, again, whether it's procurement, whether it's helping an organization through a demand letter or an accessibility claim, or helping a large piece of software build accessible technology, like no single person or division can be responsible for accessibility.

[00:37:07.48] And I think that's such an important, important topic for both immature accessibility organizations and very mature ones. You might have a very large and robust and amazing accessibility

team, but it still takes an army. You still have to have marketing, IT, procurement, People Services, legal, all buying into accessibility to really impact change.

[00:37:28.47] So I would say, if you're on this call, and you're trying to drive some of this stuff forward, I guess, for lack of a better term, keep fighting the good fight, and build those champions. And I think one of the best ways you can do that is that organic building of other internal champions, through an immersion training. And that's something we do a lot. We'd be happy to do it for your organization.

[00:37:48.50] So if we can help with this, obviously, reach out. We'd love to have a conversation at this point. And I know AP loves to do those demos and answer all the questions that he tends to get from those demos when people see it in action for the first time. So that's something that I think is so critical. And I think AP's real life story is a perfect example of that.

[00:38:07.31] The second one is, and I think this is a lot of the conversations that I've had, with both mid-market and enterprise organizations over the past six months on the procurement side, and the procurement sort of process, and ProcureEnsure, and how can we build this in. I think one of the biggest things that I've learned, and it's been kind of interesting, actually, is for any of this to work, right, for any procurement accessibility practices, Procure Access, or ProcureEnsure, for any of it to have impact, you really have to bridge that gap between the accessibility team or whoever is tasked with accessibility.

[00:38:39.85] Right because you might not have an accessibility title. You might not have an actual accessibility division. But maybe it's marketing. Maybe it's IT. Maybe it's product managers. And then your procurement team. You have to bridge that gap between those teams. In fact, you have to meet.

[00:38:53.95] And it's been amazing, some of the procurement calls that I've had with organizations, where the procurement team and then who's ever championing accessibility, are meeting for the first time on that call. And I think that's one of the challenges with procurement accessibility. Everybody-- and look, every organization struggles with this. People live in silos.

[00:39:11.38] I think if you can bridge that gap and have those conversations, and just build that awareness within the procurement team, I think that will really solve a lot of these challenges. And allow you to implement some of these things that we're talking about today, both short term and then, obviously, build this into the process and longer term.

[00:39:26.86] I think how procurement needs to support accessibility, and, look, this is a short list. It's not the end all be all, by any stretch of the imagination. But I think just commit to accessibility testing in the software procurement process. Let's start at that simple, simple, simple baseline. And we're going to give you a solution in a few minutes that can solve that challenge. But just show that commitment. Hey, we are going to do some level of testing of any product that we look to procure.

[00:39:51.19] And it can be really, really simple. It can be really quick. But at least building that buy in of we will do an assessment, so that we aren't just purchasing stuff, procuring stuff, and then throwing it over the fence and saying, hey, is this accessible? It's too late, as we talked about earlier in the conversation.

[00:40:05.92] And then you really working in to your standard procurement packets and processes, as we'll talk about, actually, on the next slide, like just some standard questions and some standard requirements that you can ask your vendors to at least be able to pass that on to others in the organization. Or at least get a quick gauge of where that vendor might be at, with accessibility. And then how accessibility supports procurement.

[00:40:28.96] I think one of the biggest ways they can do that is ensure testing is done quickly. But then offer the ability for subjective third party testing, to remove barriers in that process. AP, do you want to talk a little bit about that? I know we'll get into it a little more in detail with talking about ProcureEnsure, and how we can support organizations on that service, but this is something I've actually heard from accessibility teams that a lot of vendors, nowadays, actually want that third party assessment.

[00:40:55.18] They want access to a subjective vendor to do that testing. So it's not just the vendor looking to procure their software, saying it's not accessible. Because it might be like, well, that's obvious.

[00:41:05.35] Right. Yeah, no I agree with you. I think that there's really been a kind of shift here. And I think it really stems from the fact that purchasers have really come to the realization that you can't necessarily take a vendor at their word around this. I will say, any time I have ever been on a procurement call or a call with a software vendor, I have never once had them say to me, our software is not accessible. I've either had them say yes, or I've had them say, I don't know. Let me find out.

[00:41:38.86] Sometimes we found that, hey, they actually have an internal accessibility team. But nobody is ever upfront about the fact that their software is not accessible. And so when it comes to the documentation that you might ask, whether there's an accessibility conformance report or a VPAT, purchasers have kind of become smart on the fact that you really want to see that coming from an objective, third party.

[00:42:02.01] If I am purchasing a piece of software from Calendly, I want to implement Calendly as my calendar solution. And I ask for a VPAT, and the VPAT that they give me indicates that they conducted their assessment. The support contact on it is their own IT support. It says that it was written by them. There is no third party branding, nothing on it to indicate the fact that it's generated by a third party, an objective third party.

[00:42:26.28] There's not a lot of value in that. Certainly, back even when I worked at the University of Montana, this was something that we looked for, whenever we received any kind of accessibility documentation, was it backed up by an objective third party? And if it wasn't, that was something that we certainly took into consideration. And it devalued the VPAT, or whatever that documentation was. We were a lot less inclined to take it at its word, if it didn't come from that objective third party.

[00:42:51.79] And purchasers and vendors, I think, have caught on to this fact. And so the demand has now really grown. These vendors selling their software want that objective third party to look at it, to provide their assessment on it. That way, they can provide it to any purchasers who are interested in it.

(DESCRIPTION)
[00:43:05.84] Slide.

(SPEECH)
[00:43:06.81] Yeah, I think that that's great, great insight, as far as how you guys sort of approached that, back at the University of Montana. Because I think that's so relevant. And we're still, again, not only starting to have those conversations, but I think those conversations are much more common now, today, than they ever have been. Like bringing in a third party to do those assessments and ensure, really streamlining that review process, but also ensuring that it is done by a third party who's not just going to blatantly say it's accessible.

[00:43:32.04] So, no. Super, super helpful, AP, on that front. And then some baseline vendor questions that you can provide. And, look, I learned a lot of this at last year's disability conference down in, I think it was in Orlando last year, last summer. But then also studying the Procure Access toolkits. Like we've talked about it a few times, there's a lot more robust questions you can ask in that disability and Procure Access tooklit. That's available on their website, for free, actually. You can go and look at it today.

[00:44:01.11] But a few questions that I pulled out that I think really just help build awareness, and I think it's so critical. And I talk to organizations, not just, again, on procurement in this front, but also just building an accessibility roadmap and starting their accessibility journey, it's really critical to start small. You have to start somewhere. You can't have a fully baked system from day one because it's probably going to overwhelm you.

[00:44:23.51] So I think starting small and building in just really simple questions into that procurement process. The few that I would call out specifically, is asking your vendor, does your team have an ACR or VPAT for your product? If it's yes, then getting into what AP said. Was that testing performed by a third party vendor? And then on top of that, how old is that ACR or VPAT report? Because, as we talked about earlier in the conversation, or in the webinar, you have a lot of software that's out there that's changing every single day.

[00:44:50.65] If that VPATs from six years ago, that's irrelevant. That product might not even look, act, or have the same functionality as it did six years ago. So I think just getting an understanding of how much did they understand accessibility and what has been their buying. Because I think if the answer to all of these is, no, we don't have one, or it's from six years ago, you can pretty safely assume that the product probably has accessibility barriers that you should consider in that procurement process.

[00:45:16.85] The other one, and AP, I'll kind of then spin this one to you, but I think it's really critical to ask, and I know the Disability:IN team talks about this a lot in the Procure Access process, but has your product been tested by people with disabilities in the past 12 months? And if yes, do you perform ongoing testing of those new features? So, obviously, this one's near and dear to you. But I think that's such a critical question to ask. Not just relying on have you run automation, but really bringing in that usability side and having people with disabilities actually test the products.

[00:45:46.57] But anything to add on that front. And then that ongoing testing that we talk about all the time with our clients.

[00:45:51.82] Yeah. This was what I lived and breathed, back at the university. I was the one person they had, a live user with a disability, a user of screen reading software, who was able to conduct that software testing. And, again, that's kind of why, as we talked about earlier, you saw that kind of bottleneck forming around it.

[00:46:09.21] But I absolutely agree. You just can't undervalue the importance of having a live user with a disability conduct testing on it. Obviously, the more types of disabilities, the more types of assistive technologies, the better. But, obviously, this is something that can get really difficult and snowball really fast. And so our approach at Allyant has been that whenever we are conducting an assessment, whenever we are performing an audit, we do that in teams of two, consisting of a sighted engineer, somebody who doesn't have a disability, is able to see the sight. They can test for things like keyboard navigation, focus indicators, closed captioning on videos, that type of thing.

[00:46:48.04] And then we have, what we call a screen reader engineer, a screen reader auditor. And they are usually somebody like myself, somebody who is blind or pretty significantly low vision, use a screen reading software on a daily basis. And their role is to check to see if there are issues that impact users of screen reading software. And, truly, it's through the combination, that combined testing, that you can really ensure that something is accessible, it's usable, and that it provides the same experience.

[00:47:14.20] If I was just testing it alone, myself, as a user with a disability, and I click a button and that button doesn't work, I might not necessarily know exactly what had happened. Whereas the sighted engineer would know that if you click the button, that dialog box appears. But they might not necessarily know that for a screen reader user, they have no idea what happens. So it's really that combination of testing that helps ensure that you have the conversation and you say, OK, when I hit this button a dialog appears. Is that happening with a screen reader? No, it's not.

[00:47:44.45] That's how you find out those issues. And so you really-- there's just no way to truly determine whether or not something is accessible, is usable, if it doesn't discriminate, doesn't deny users with disabilities access. There is no way to know that without live user testing by persons with disabilities. There is no tool, no automation, no AI that is going to do that for you. You've got to have that live user testing.

[00:48:07.96] Yeah. No, that's such a great point and great context, AP, as to why I think this question is so critical. And like your baseline vendor questions, right. And then the final one is basically just asking them. Because even if it's no to all the stuff above, then it's like, what's your roadmap? Can you provide your digital accessibility plan related to the product being procured?

[00:48:27.91] And, again, these three questions, or I guess, technically, five questions or six questions, that kind of build on each other, it's not an end all be all. It's maybe not the list you have 12 months from now. But I think just bringing the accessibility conversation into procurement, with even three or four or five simple questions, can really start to help your procurement team build that awareness, pass that to the accessibility team or the key stakeholders focused on accessibility, including legal.

[00:48:52.15] And then allowing you to, as we talked about way at the start of the webinar, bring that into that contract process. Bring that into the legal team and say, hey, look, we don't think this product has ever thought about accessibility. And then maybe you can have us do a procurement report and build on top of that as well. So, hopefully, that's helpful, just to, again, I think it's so important, with so many topics in digital accessibility, to truly walk before you run, and start small, start somewhere, and then build on these processes over time.

[00:49:19.53] But if never start small or anywhere, then nothing ever gets off the ground. So I'm a big, big fan and a big believer of starting small.

(DESCRIPTION)
[00:49:25.93] Slide.

(SPEECH)
[00:49:26.78] Then diving into-- so we've talked and we set this up. Like how can how Allyant help? What have we built with our ProcureEnsure service and why can this help you build this into your process.

[00:49:40.53] So, first of all, we've launched this ProcureEnsure service. We launched it actually at the Disability:IN conference last July, so July 2023. And this is a free procurement assessment, when your team is procuring third party software. So we sort of now kind of closed the loop on this. AP and I talked about why procurement is accessible-- or accessibility is important, what the challenges are, why you need to test third party software and do assessments that include people living with disabilities. But Now we've provided a service that is totally free of charge and your team can leverage, quite frankly, starting tomorrow, if you wanted to.

[00:50:15.48] So we have built this service to really expand on what Disability:IN is doing through that Procure Access program, and bringing that testing into the marketplace, in a very streamlined process. Generally speaking, these assessments, if we have credentials, if we have everything we need, AP and his team generally turns these around in five to seven business days. So we've removed that barrier, that challenge, even for mature accessibility organizations that have that internal team that's backlogged,

because they're understaffed, and they have a million things on their plate, like AP at the University of Montana.

[00:50:44.69] And so there's really no excuse for not doing some level of accessibility testing when we can get your results in five to seven business days, and there's no cost to it. And I'll kind of, AP, have you jump in on this slide and really talk to the spirit of ProcureEnsure in the sense of the fact that as you just perfectly explained, ProcureEnsure does include people with disabilities every single time. So do you want to run through how we do these assessments and kind of the key functionality we cover off on in that three hour product assessment?

[00:51:15.02] Because it's not a full audit in that assessment, but it can do a pretty good job of giving a baseline of the accessibility of the product.

[00:51:21.71] Yeah, happy to talk through this. So, I mean, really so much of ProcureEnsure, when I think back to my time at the university, ProcureEnsure is what I was doing at the university. And so when we are conducting a ProcureEnsure assessment on a piece of software, as Ryan said, we aren't conducting a full audit. We aren't going to go and test every feature, every piece of functionality.

[00:51:43.22] If you think about a typical piece of software, that is just simply not practical. Imagine trying to say with a straight face, I'm going to go and review every feature, every piece of functionality in Microsoft Excel. Never going to happen. And so, in the end, what you want to do, and how we perform procure ensure assessments, is we try to identify what are some of the primary things that users are going to use the software for. And this is, I believe, a question that we ask even during the kind of ramping up process when you come to us for a ProcureEnsure assessment, is what are you planning on using this for?

[00:52:18.38] What is the purpose of this software? Because we want to get an idea as to what it is that you're going to use it for, because that's what we specifically want to test. And so I like to use Calendly as an example. If somebody from Calendly is on the call love, your product. Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions about how our review went. But it's fantastic.

[00:52:35.45] And so what is somebody going to most often use Calendly for? When we think about it, they're going to use it to book appointments. You're going to have a link in your email or maybe on your bio page, whatever it might be, that somebody can click on, and they can book an appointment with you, using Calendly. And so when we conduct a ProcureEnsure assessment of Calendly, we focused on that particular flow, of actually clicking on a Calendly link, going through the process of actually selecting a time, selecting a date, and booking an appointment with somebody.

[00:53:07.14] And so in testing that, we can really get a feel for, OK, how accessible is this? Are we running into anything that's really making it impossible to get through this particular user flow? And so, based on the results we find there, if we find that, hey, everything is hunky dory, or the issues we found were very, very minor, there are very few, they were very far between, then we will provide a report with a

green rating. And in that report, we will also highlight what some of the accessibility features are, or accessibility benefits.

[00:53:41.48] So, for example, maybe they use heading structure really well. Every form field was labeled. All of the alert messages are reading out. Landmarks are really great. Whatever it might be that is like making this really great and really accessible, we'll identify some of those accessibility features.

[00:53:56.47] On the other hand, if we go and we conduct that assessment and we find, OK, there are accessibility issues, that there are a fair few of them. They aren't so bad, as to make it impossible to actually get through this process that we are testing, but they're there and they're notable. They're not insignificant.

[00:54:15.41] Then in that scenario, we would provide a yellow rating. And so with that yellow rating, we will provide two things as well. We will list out what some of the accessibility features are, again, just like I talked about. What are the things that they're doing really well? And then we will also let you know what some of the biggest accessibility issues were that we encountered.

[00:54:35.03] And so like, for example, with Calendly, I was able to go through that entire user flow of clicking a link, selecting a date, selecting a time, and booking the actual appointment. However, I also found that the time zone dropdown that you used to select a different time zone, that wasn't working for me with my screen reading software. And so did that make it impossible for me to actually book an appointment? No.

[00:55:00.98] But would we call that an insignificant issue? No. Because if somebody actually did need to change the time zone on there, they would potentially be stuck. It at least defaulted to the time zone I was in, based on my location, and that was exactly what I needed anyway. So that didn't create a super significant barrier. And so for that reason, when we did an assessment of Calendly, we gave it that yellow rating. And in the accessibility issues, that was the top thing we pointed out, is that the time zone dropdown that you use is not accessible for screen reader and keyboard only users.

[00:55:32.51] And then if we're doing the assessment and we find, wow, there is just a complete roadblock here. There's no way this is going to work. There's no way you're going to get through it. The accessibility issues are so critical, so severe. You have buttons all over the place that can only be activated by the mouse. They're not reachable by the keyboard. Screen reader users can't get to them, that type of thing. Then, in that scenario, we're going to give it a red rating.

[00:55:52.37] And in that red rating, we aren't going to even provide any accessibility features. We are just going to focus on what are those accessibility issues that were so severe, we felt we had to give it that red rating. And so is it a comprehensive assessment of every piece, every feature, every functionality in the application? No. Does it list out every single issue or feature that we happen to encounter? No.

[00:56:14.66] But what it will give you is a nice, quick idea of those core user tasks, that you are primarily thinking about using the software for, how accessible is that, how operable, how usable is that? Are they accessibility issues. So bad that it just it's a no go and we should look and think about something else? And from there you can use that to help those conversations with the vendor. If you wanted to purchase their software, it comes back with this red rating, you can show that to them and say, look, you've got to work on this. And that's where Allyant can really step in.

[00:56:46.47] And so, Ryan, I think I'll hand it back to you, there.

[00:56:49.04] Yeah, no. That's perfect. I think bringing the real life example makes it so useful and so tangible. And I think the red, yellow, green is really important, as well. When we go back to earlier in the webinar, talking about we shouldn't expect procurement team members to be accessibility professionals. So when we were building out this service and AP was thinking about some of this stuff, I think the red, yellow, green kept it simple enough for anyone to understand.

[00:57:13.82] And as part of this, and I'll go into some of the FAQs in the next slide, as part of the takeaway from ProcureEnsure, we can help you build out that internal process. If Allyant gives this a red, like the now what? And if it's a yellow, the now what? And if it's green, great. And it doesn't mean that the entire product is accessible, but it's generally in good shape. So I think we can help with closing that loop after ProcureEnsure as well, and really building out that strategy of how you approach those vendors.

[00:57:41.06] I think it's important to cover off on a few FAQs. I actually saw some of the questions that were fed to me were actually aligned with some of these questions as well. So the first one is why does Allyant offer this for free? And biggest reason is it was in and built out of support of disability and Procure Access program, as a corporate partner, that we are here at Allyant.

[00:58:01.97] We saw some of the challenges at CSUN 23, at the Disability:IN conference last year, and leading up to that, of where Procure Access is so amazing. But some of the challenges teams were having, actually doing that testing, as we talked about, in length, through this call.

[00:58:17.04] And then as part of that as well, we do obtain, and I think transparency is important, we obtain a warm lead with an organization that generally needs our help. I do tend to give vendors, and some people, and some of my peers might disagree with me, but I tend to give vendors the benefit of the doubt. Look, I know WCAG is not new. In fact, it's quite old.

[00:58:35.66] But a lot of vendors, they maybe haven't thought about accessibility. But once they understand those challenges, they are willing to build it into their product. And this becomes a one to many. For every single product vendor we help build an accessible product for, it doesn't affect just the customer we did ProcureEnsure for. It affects many, in some cases, thousands or hundreds of thousands of customers, which turns into millions of users across the globe that are living with disabilities. So this really helps drive forward our mission and vision, here at Allyant.

[00:59:03.89] And I did get a question. I got one fed to me that I think is it's a good time to answer this, because we're running short on time. But I'll answer this one here. So can we help inaccessible vendors meet contract requirements? So we've talked about some of that Procure Access contract language. You learn it's not accessible. And maybe you build in realistic benchmarks. Like don't be accessible tomorrow, but six, eight, 12 months down the line, we want you to have engaged a third party vendor, do live user testing, get a third party ACR or VPAT, and really have a solid roadmap in place.

[00:59:33.21] And the short answer to that is yes. And ProcureEnsure really helps us drive that for our clients. So a lot of the clients that we're working with this on, it's not just bringing that procurement testing into the front end of that purchase process, and having them as AP perfectly explained, document what they've done. Document that testing from a risk mitigation perspective. But then help them with that-- support that vendor in meeting those contract requirements.

[00:59:58.33] So that's absolutely one of the takeaways out of ProcureEnsure as well. And that's more of our traditional wheelhouse consulting services that we provide to organizations through web or mobile or product accessibility audits and roadmaps.

[01:00:11.28] What if the vendor provided us with a VPAT? AP talked about this one a little earlier. Don't take a VPAT at face value. But, again, procurement teams aren't professionals in accessibility, and they might not know a VPAT doesn't live up to the paper that it's printed on. So we will do a VPAT validation, as we call it, through that ProcureEnsure assessment. So it's not like you can only do this on something where there's no baseline for accessibility. If that vendor has a VPAT, we will assess that VPAT as part of that assessment as well.

[01:00:38.65] And then one of the most common questions I get when I do these calls, how can we request a ProcureEnsure assessment? So we've actually built a fairly detailed intake form. Because I think AP perfectly explains some of the scenarios where that becomes relevant, of what is the product? What are you looking to do with the product? How are your internal employees or consumers going to use the product?

[01:00:58.24] So really helping us obtain that information, as best we can, in that intake form, really helps with that. So we've built a pretty streamlined service and document that can help you pass those ProcureEnsure assessments over to us and allow our team to deliver them back to you as quickly as possible.

[01:01:15.39] Then jumping into the how can we help? How can Allyant help? I talked about it early in the presentation. You can reach us at info@allyant.com. We have an Allyant page on the ProcureEnsure service. Obviously, you can go there. You can reach out via the web form that's on that page, or just shoot us an email. And we can start having a deeper conversation and helping your specific organization build this into your procurement processes for 2024.

[01:01:42.81] And even, the one thing I'll say here, because I have a little bullet on it, it's not just procurement of new technology. I think one of the things we've learned in having a lot of these conversations is, well, we have five or six things out there, living, breathing on our website, that are really critical to our users that are third party. We'll still assess those.

[01:02:01.17] So it can be at software renewal, it can be at net new procurement, or it can just be vendors that are on your site, third party products that you think could be adding significant risk to your site or to your digital property. So we'll assess those as well. So reach out at any time. We'd be happy to help you.

[01:02:17.76] Like I said, I think we're right at time, maybe slightly over time. But there is one more question that I think would be helpful. And then I'll kind of close the loop on questions after that. But the one that came in, that I think is a good one, is are there scenarios where the vendor will not-- I got to read this again. Where the vendor will not give Allyant access to the product?

[01:02:37.03] This is a great question, and this is one that I get quite often. I will be honest, we've done a lot of procurement assessments. There's only been one scenario where we had to, of work with the vendor and our client on getting access. But, ultimately, as with anything that we do, we're happy to talk with that vendor, sign NDAs, et cetera, and talk through the spirit of what we're going to be doing, and ensure that they're comfortable with the process that we'll be putting them through. So I think we've largely avoided that. And, obviously, we're happy to work with you and the vendor on getting through that as well.

[01:03:09.58] One quick, final comment. Any questions that we didn't get to directly in the chat live, or that we didn't answer, we will, AP or I or someone from Allyant will follow up ASAP on all of those questions. And we would also be happy to have a deeper conversation with you on anything we talked about, didn't get to, any questions that want went unanswered. Or as your team reviews this, after the fact, right, when we send out the recording, if questions arise, just reach out. We would be happy to have a conversation and support you through this.

[01:03:36.81] But outside of that, AP, I don't know if you have anything, any final comments to add. But aside from that, I think we just want to thank everybody for joining us today.

[01:03:45.25] No, I don't have anything more to add. Thank you all very much for joining us today. Really enjoyed talking with you all. Please don't hesitate to post those questions you have there in the chat, if you've got them. And looking forward to responding with those and keeping the conversation going.

[01:03:58.29] Perfect. Thanks AP. Thanks all.

[01:04:00.18] Thanks Ryan. Thank you all.

(DESCRIPTION)
[01:04:01.31] Allyant.com.