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AI analysis

Attracting the Biggest Possible Audience: Increasing Accessibility Through Hybrid Event Technology

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Summary

The session led by Jake Ward from Groovy Gecko explored the importance of increasing accessibility through hybrid event technology. He began by highlighting the inherent advantages of hybrid events, such as overcoming geographical and physical access issues. Ward emphasized the significance of accessibility by citing statistics from the UK, including the large number of individuals with hearing loss, colour blindness, neurodiversity, and sight loss. He argued that half of the UK audience has accessibility requirements, making it crucial for businesses to cater to these needs. Groovy Gecko has been at the forefront of accessible webcasting for many years, and Ward discussed their efforts to integrate accessibility requirements into their platform, Echo Enterprise, making it WCAG 2.2a compliant.

Ward highlighted the importance of WCAG 2.2a compliance, which ensures content compatibility with various user agents, such as screen readers. This compliance also addresses visual input difficulties, providing alt text for images and managing focus and target size. The platform maintains consistent navigation and prevents users from having to re-enter data repetitively. Ward then introduced the concept of widgets, which allow users to select and fine-tune their accessibility requirements. These settings are remembered across different webcasts, enhancing user experience. He provided examples of how the platform adapts to different accessibility needs, such as changing contrast for ADHD users and maintaining focus on specific content.

The session delved into the European Union's accessibility act, which requires all video content to be subtitled in the relevant European language. Ward explained that this act is critical for engaging a European audience and discussed the benefits of multi-language subtitling and audio description. He noted that sign language interpretation is challenging due to the limited number of interpreters, but AI is making strides in creating virtual signers. Although these avatars are not yet perfect, they offer a viable option for live interpretation.





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Ward showcased various examples of webcasts Groovy Gecko has produced for clients like Tesco, Bupa, and Netflix, demonstrating that high accessibility standards do not restrict creativity. He argued that accessibility should be viewed as an opportunity to attract a broader audience rather than a limitation. The session also explored innovative solutions for accessibility, such as the use of AI to summarise presentations for ADHD users. This feature, initially designed for neurodiverse individuals, proved beneficial for other departments as well, highlighting the broader impact of accessibility-driven innovation.

In conclusion, Ward stressed that the minimum standard for accessibility is WCAG 2.2a compliance, but businesses should aim higher by adding features like multi-language support and sign language interpretation. He encouraged viewing accessibility as a means to grow and innovate, ultimately enhancing the overall audience experience. The session underscored Groovy Gecko's commitment to integrating accessibility into their platform and leveraging it to drive engagement and inclusivity.

The session concluded with Ward inviting questions from the audience and offering to discuss their specific needs further. He reiterated the importance of accessibility in attracting the largest possible audience and enhancing user engagement. Groovy Gecko's efforts to integrate comprehensive accessibility features into their platform serve as a model for other businesses aiming to reach diverse and global audiences.

Takeaways

Inherent advantages of hybrid events

Hybrid events offer significant benefits in terms of accessibility by overcoming geographical and physical access barriers. Jake Ward highlighted that hybrid events allow individuals who cannot physically attend to participate virtually, thus broadening the audience reach. This approach not only caters to individuals with physical disabilities but also addresses content access issues.

WCAG 2.2a compliance and widgets

Groovy Gecko's platform, Echo Enterprise, is designed to be WCAG 2.2a compliant, ensuring compatibility with various user agents like screen readers. Widgets on the platform allow users to select and fine-tune their accessibility requirements, which are remembered across different webcasts. This enhances user experience by providing personalised accessibility settings.

European Union's accessibility act

The European Union's accessibility act mandates that all video content be subtitled in the relevant European language, which is crucial for engaging a European audience. Jake Ward discussed the benefits of multi-language subtitling and audio description. While sign language interpretation remains challenging, AI-driven virtual signers are emerging as a viable option for live interpretation.



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