

Summary of Alessandro Riva's Web Accessibility Demonstration

Alessandro Riva provided a practical demonstration focused on **making program websites and web content accessible**, emphasizing that accessibility improvements are **approachable, doable, and largely supported by existing tools**.

Purpose of the Demo

The session highlighted how users who rely on **assistive technologies**, such as screen readers, experience web content. Screen readers convert visual information into audio and rely on **page structure and semantics**—not visual formatting—to navigate content. Without proper structure, users may miss information or find pages difficult to use.

Key Tool Demonstrated

- **WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool**
 - A browser extension used to scan web pages for accessibility issues.
 - Identifies:
 - **Errors** (definite problems that must be fixed)
 - **Contrast errors** (color visibility issues)
 - **Alerts** (potential issues requiring review)
 - Provides explanations, examples, and guidance for each issue flagged.

Common Accessibility Issues Identified

Alessandro walked through typical problems found on web pages and explained why they matter:

1. **Missing alternative (alt) text for images**
 - Screen readers skip images without alt text.
 - Images that convey meaning or include text must have descriptions.
 - Avoid images of text whenever possible.
2. **Improper heading structure**
 - Pages should have one **Heading 1** (page title).
 - Heading levels should follow a logical order (H2, H3, etc.).
 - Skipped heading levels confuse screen-reader users.
3. **Vague or non-descriptive links**

- Links like “click here” or pasted URLs are inaccessible.
 - Link text should clearly describe the destination or action.
4. **Empty or decorative headings**
- Headings used only for spacing create confusion for assistive technologies.
5. **Low color contrast**
- Poor contrast makes text unreadable for users with low vision.
 - Often caused by copied formatting from Word or PDFs.
6. **Tables used incorrectly**
- Tables are difficult for screen readers unless properly structured.
 - Should be reserved for true tabular data, not layout.
 - Lists are often a better alternative.
7. **Visual formatting used instead of semantic structure**
- Bold text or dashes used to mimic headings or lists are not accessible.
 - Proper heading and list tools must be used.

Key Takeaways

- Accessibility is about **structure, not appearance**.
- Using built-in formatting tools (headings, lists, links) ensures content is readable by assistive technologies.
- Many accessibility issues can be identified and resolved quickly using WAVE.
- If content creators feel unsure or overwhelmed, they can request assistance through Marketing/Alessandro.

Resources Shared

- Link to **recorded training sessions**
- **Accessibility checklists** with best practices and examples
- WAVE extension link for independent review of web pages

Overall Message

Accessibility improvements are **manageable and incremental**, and making small changes—such as fixing headings, links, and image descriptions—can significantly improve access for all users.