# Discussing Accessibility With Vendors

## Introduction

Frequently sales people and representatives of companies we purchase products from do not have an understanding about accessibility[[1]](#endnote-1) and accessibility features in their products and services. In addition, university administrators and those involved in purchasing products and services also may have very limited knowledge and understanding about accessibility or how to inquire about or discuss accessibility of the product or service they want to purchase from vendors. So it is possible that none of the parties involved in procurement is familiar with accessibility or has the means to verify accessibility claims. This is why accessibility is frequently neglected or jeopardized in such negotiations and deal-makings, and the time and costs to remedy after the fact can be monumental.

This brief handout should give you some ideas about how to talk with a vendor about accessibility and the right questions to ask while you are educating them about accessibility.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Generally, we need to consider five (5) areas when we are talking about accessibility with a vendor.

## Accessible Design

Considering the accessibility at the design stage ensures that the product is designed with accessibility from ground up, the right set of technologies and techniques[[3]](#endnote-3) are used during the implementation, and the accessibility features are tested in-house before the product enters the market.

## Accessibility Testing

The best way to test a product for accessibility is to test by using real users with disabilities. A mixed group of users with disabilities can provide extremely valuable feedback to the product development team. This will give the development team an opportunity to see the real users interacting with their product first hand, see the shortcomings, and how users can benefit from accessibility features.

## Accessibility Education

Many application developers have never thought about or dealt with accessibility issues. Understanding accessibility issues might be too abstract to them. We need to educate vendors about the benefits of universal design[[4]](#endnote-4) and how easy it is to achieve it if we think about it at the right time. And remember accessibility is free if we consider it at the design phase.

## Accessibility Documentation

Vendors need to provide documentation on accessibility features supported in their product. This can help users to learn more about the product and how to effectively use it.

## Accessibility Support

Support staff should be trained and educated about the basic accessibility features of their products so they can help users with disabilities with accessibility related questions.

1. Define accessibility [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. This handout is taken from the full publication ‘How to talk and discuss about accessibility with vendors’ http://blog.bargirangin.com/ [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. give a reference for what you mean by ‘right set of technologies and techniques’ [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. what is universal design – add a reference

Author: [↑](#endnote-ref-4)