Automated Solution Raises the Bar for Making Electronic Documents Available to Low-Vision Users

Image-based PDFs are incompatible with text-to-speech technology, denying visually disabled people access to much-needed content. Accessibil-IT eliminates this obstacle by converting image-only PDFs into documents whose content is available though adaptive technologies. But OCR is critical to the company's conversion processes and accuracy issues meant slow, costly, manual reentry – until Accessibil-IT deployed ABBYY Recognition Server™.

"Our quality of work and turnaround exceeded our customer's goals… we couldn't do it without Recognition Server."

Adam Spencer, Head of Document Accessibility Services, Accessibil-IT

About Accessibil-IT

Accessibil-IT is the industry leader in making electronic documents accessible to people with print disabilities. They are committed to making PDF content easily available to users of adaptive technologies and ensuring compliance for all of their customers. These include businesses and government agencies that seek to comply with the fast-growing number of accessibility regulations. For more information, please visit www.accessibilit.com.

A world of opportunity just out of reach…

The PDF format is key to distributing content, but international law states that information must be equally available to all. Many PDFs are image-based, barring their content to users of adaptive technologies – which require a text layer to allow for text to speech. "This presents companies and governments with urgent compliance and human rights issues," says Adam Spencer, Head of Document Accessibility Services at Accessibil-IT. "We sought to offer them a turnkey solution."

Accessibil-IT uses proprietary technology and third-party OCR software to offer organizations an easy solution for creating accessible PDFs. Customers simply send them image-only documents and receive fully accessible and compliant PDFs in return. Highly popular, the service's global market potential was huge. But low OCR accuracy in the company's previous software required lengthy review and manual correction of the text layers in converted PDFs – limiting the volume Accessibil-IT could handle.

The solution to realizing a huge opportunity

As Spencer explains, "Our customers have vast stores of content they need to post online and much of it is in image-only legacy PDFs – so they send them to us. We OCR the PDFs to create a "taggable" text layer, and after conversion they're inspected for accuracy. Then our software analyzes the content and assigns metadata that enable access by adaptive technologies."

But Accessibil-IT's first OCR software was only 40% accurate – a recognition rate that was so low, that according to Spencer: "Masses of manual remediation was necessary."

Such extra effort raised prices while slowing turnarounds, severely impacting affordability and productivity. Then, as Spencer's team searched for a better solution, a client announced a major initiative. "The project required us to expand capacity by magnitudes, and final content had to be delivered in just five weeks," recalls Spencer. "It was sink or swim so we narrowed our search to four competitors, ran evaluations and chose ABBYY Recognition Server™."

Set and forget document conversion – no manual correction needed

With little time for implementation and no room for error, Spencer says ABBYY Recognition Server offered three advantages over the competition: "Accuracy, reliability and efficiency. We had to go from 5000 pages a week to 150,000 without missing a beat."

After a brief consultation with ABBYY's Canada Country Manager, Brian Mackintosh, the Accessibil-IT team downloaded ABBYY Recognition Server and installed it on a Dell Vostro Small Business Tower. "We installed the software ourselves," said Spencer. "It took one phone call to ABBYY to get the configuration right – and that was that."

Up and running in a day, Accessibil-IT's new OCR solution performed beyond expectation. "It was basically set it and forget it," says Spencer. "We queued up the documents, left Recognition Server to automatically recognize and convert them and were amazed by the output. Inspections showed a 98% recognition rate and still do. Now we go straight into tagging, almost no manual corrections necessary."

The results

For Accessibil-IT the results in quality, turnaround time and efficiency were dramatic. "Without Recognition Server's accuracy and automation," says Spencer, "we couldn't have fulfilled on that project. The volume was too high to accommodate manually. It would have been cost prohibitive."

And for Accessibil-IT's customers the savings in time, money and productivity have been impressive, too. "ABBYY saves our customers a lot of money and helps accelerate their schedules," confirms Spencer. "Now, instead of doing one project at a time, they're doing multiples. They and other clients have expanded our volume of work and thanks to ABBYY we can handle it."

As Spencer says, "With Recognition Server, recognition quality and our options became infinitely better."

The Challenge:

Eliminate expensive delays caused by inaccurate OCR by enabling Accessibil-IT to quickly and accurately create accessible PDFs – thereby increasing the capacity and quality of their services.

The Solution:

Accessibil-IT has fully-automated the OCR stage of their service and achieved 100% recognition accuracy with the help of ABBYY Recognition Server. By eliminating time-consuming and costly manual correction of converted PDFs, Accessibil-IT has decreased turnaround times, lowered costs and increased their volume of business.

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Learn more at www.ABBYY.com/Recognition_Server

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