# 1% Shifts to Improve Digital Accessibility

Kate DeForest, Web/Digital Content Coordinator, State University of New York at Oswego

## Atomic Habits

### Small Shifts = Big Impact

* A 1% shift in behavior can have an enormous impact on the overall culture.
* Small changes and shifts in mindset or behavior are more easily implemented and accepted rather than big overhauls.
* Effects of change will not be immediately noticeable, but builds over time to be significant.
* Creating good systems is more important than the ending goal. Systems will help you get to the goal.

**Example**: New Year’s resolutions

Many people fail at keeping their resolutions for the entire year because the end goal is too big and they don’t consider how to get there.

“The purpose of setting goals is to win the game. The purpose of building systems is to continue playing the game.” - James Clear

## Objectives:

Share strategies on how to implement the 4 laws of Atomic Habits to improve digital accessibility:

1. Make it obvious
2. Make it attractive
3. Make it easy
4. Make it satisfying

We can’t just tell people they need to make materials “more accessible.” Many times people don’t know what that means, they don’t know how, or they don’t know where to start. As digital accessibility champions and advocates, we need to break that down for others.

By making small shifts to incorporate these 4 principles, you are starting to build the system that will support improving the overall digital accessibility culture.

## 1. Make it Obvious

“Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior.”

**Example**: Build an environment that supports the habit you’re implementing

Put junk food snacks out of sight and fruit in the middle of the table. I bought an incline sit-up bench and put it in my bedroom, between my bed and the wall, because I knew if I put it in the basement with my weight bench I’d never use it.

### Put accessibility front and center

* Make it automatically part of workshops, orientations, course developments, etc.
	+ Should not be treated as an add-on or afterthought
* Be direct, clear, and specific
	+ Do not beat around the bush, it doesn’t work
	+ Don’t just say that people should improve the accessibility of their materials; tell them why and give them resources that tell them how
* Provide lots of resources and step-by-step information
	+ Provide tutorials, checklists, and other resources
		- Oswego.edu/accessibility
		- LinkedIn Learning
		- Deque
		- WebAIM
	+ There is no shortage of information around digital accessibility. Don’t reinvent the wheel, use what others have created if needed. Adapt what others have created to fit your own institution.

### Meet people where they are, physically and conceptually

* Sneak it into unexpected places
	+ Generally, people who need this information are not aware they do
* Hold training during regular department or unit meetings
* Include with new course developments and course revisions
* Provide a variety of formats for resources and training
	+ Beginner and intermediate
	+ Written and video tutorials
	+ Autonomous and live synchronous sessions

## 2. Make it Attractive

“We can find evidence for whatever mindset we choose.”

**Example**: Need to versus Want to

When I was a kid, if I didn’t want to go somewhere with my family, I made that known, saying I wouldn’t have any fun. My father would tell me, “Of course you won’t have fun if you don’t want to go.” It took many years for me to fully understand what that statement meant. There is an example in the book about a man in a wheelchair. When asked if it’s difficult being confined by the wheelchair, he responds that he isn’t confined, he’s free to leave his house.

Your wording around digital accessibility can help create a more positive mindset for people.

### Shift the Perspective

* Change one word to change the outlook of your narrative
	+ Negative implications vs positive implication
* Make the content creator The Good Guy
	+ Difference between “You need to make your materials more accessible” and “You get to create a more positive experience for others by making your materials more accessible.”
* Focus on the benefits accessibility has for a wide range of audiences
	+ Accessibility features can benefit those experiencing temporary, situational, or permanent disabilities, as well as those without any disabilities
	+ People can consume digital content without having to think about how to consume it
* Shifting the perspective changes the tone of the overall digital environment
	+ Becomes welcoming instead of mandatory

### Build a community

* Different areas of expertise bring different perspectives to the table
	+ By nature we are curious beings and want to learn more about things we don’t yet know or understand
* We strive to be a part of something bigger than ourselves
	+ It’s why we have book clubs, motorcycle gangs, running clubs, bowling leagues, etc.
* Being part of a group emphasizes the habit we are working toward
	+ Let your audience know they don’t have to figure it out by themselves. Use each other’s strengths to build a network of support
	+ Generally easier to stick with a habit as part of a group than alone
* We feel good when we can connect with others and share our knowledge
	+ Take advantage of knowledge hierarchy
	+ We all have stories of success, mistakes, and epic failures. Sharing those stories can help others learn.

## 3. Make it Easy

“If you want to master a habit, the key is to start with repetition, not perfection.”

**Example**: Build the system

To run a 5K, start with a Couch to 5K program. Learning how to play an instrument starts with repeating scales over and over. Doing one sit-up a day will not immediately impact your wellness, but it sets you up to do the habit repeatedly. You’re training your brain that sit-ups are part of your everyday routine. This allows the action of doing sit-ups to become automatic. Once the action is automatic, you can build on it. Introduce one aspect of accessibility at a time.

### Progress over perfection

* Take baby steps, break it down to individual aspects to be more manageable
	+ People tend to view accessibility as a huge mountain, unachievable or requiring a ton of effort. They get frustrated and overwhelmed, then shut down.
	+ Acknowledge when the small steps are understood and implemented
* Repetition can lead to efficiency
	+ The more we do something, the better we become at it
* Digital accessibility is a continual process
	+ We will never be 100% accessible to 100% of the people 100% of the time
* We can strive to be 1% better than we were last year, last month, last week
	+ Moving ahead, even slowly, is moving in the right direction

### Provide resources

* Create an online accessibility hub
	+ Templates
	+ Checklists
	+ Articles
	+ Tutorials
	+ People
* Offer Q&A sessions or weekly office hours to answer questions
* Piggyback off other professional development opportunities
	+ At Oswego, we hold Breakout periods twice a year between semesters. This is two weeks of professional development that most faculty know about. A variety of sessions are offered, and the Workgroup members lead as many accessibility-related sessions as we can.

## 4. Make it Satisfying

“Pleasure teaches your brain that a behavior is worth remembering and repeating.”

**Example**: Immediate vs delayed gratification

Our brains are hardwired to prioritize immediate rewards over delayed rewards. Which is why it’s easier to eat a box of donuts while binge-watching Netflix than to work out at the gym, even though we know which is the healthier option. Donuts are tasty now. Working out can be difficult and we don’t see immediate results. We tend to focus on the rewards for our Present Self rather than our Future Self. In order to shift our mindset to the long-term, we need to reward ourselves for the baby steps we take.

### Provide small, immediate rewards

* Add a gamification aspect
	+ Bingo cards, checklists, scavenger hunt, etc
	+ Badges to display in email or on social media
	+ Certificate of completion
* Incentivize showing up
	+ Migration and Munchies: Office hours where faculty can work individually or in groups to set up courses in Brightspace. Hosted by members of the Digital Learning Environment support team. Food is provided.
	+ Faculty Fellows: faculty receive a stipend or course reduction for meeting the program requirements
	+ Students earn extra credit or goes toward their grade
* Giveaways
	+ Raffle off gift cards, free coffee at a campus cafe, meals at a campus dining facility, fun & unique swag
* Make the experience fun
	+ Reflects the positive implication tone

### Reiterate the benefits

* Easy to learn one aspect at a time
* Connect with people who have disabilities/use assistive technology, let them tell their story and relate how their experience has been affected and/or improved
	+ At Oswego, a few students spoke with our Accessibility Workgroup and other faculty. They talked about their experiences in an online environment and brought up points that faculty had not considered, such as needing extra time to process the conversation taking place in an online discussion board.
* You are the Good Guy!
	+ Creating a more inclusive experience for others by removing potential barriers

## Putting it all together

### 10-Day & 5-Day Accessibility Challenges

* Obvious
	+ Campus-wide promotion plan
	+ Multiple recruitment emails
	+ Daily emails, consistent communication
* Attractive
	+ Framed in a very inviting, friendly, and engaging manner
	+ Allowed participants to choose path
	+ Highlighted benefits of accessibility to wide audiences
* Easy
	+ Focused on 1 topic per day using word docs
	+ Broke accessibility down into simple steps
* Satisfying
	+ Added a gamification aspect
	+ Studies show that having some kind of reward draws people in
	+ Also true for forming habits, having a reason to feel good about your actions helps you want to continue doing them

### Results

* Nearly 200 participants signed up, 2.5% of campus population
* Unique page views of the accessibility website jumped during the challenge period
* According to participant surveys, familiarity and confidence increased

## Conclusion

“Success is not a goal to reach or a finish line to cross. It is a system to improve, an endless process to refine.”

**Example**: Focus on the system

“There is no finish line.” Focusing on the system helps us maintain good habits. Once we lose 50 lbs, we can’t just go back to our old habits. We shift our overall approach to how we eat and exercise. Continuing to make 1% improvements helps maintain the system.

### Find the Goldilocks Zone

* Our motivation is at its peak when the tasks challenge us, but just a little bit
	+ Too easy, we get bored
	+ Too difficult, we get frustrated
* Fall in love with boredom
	+ Working hard when you’re motivated is easy, continuing to work when you’re bored makes the difference
* Keep advancing in small ways
	+ Move forward 1% at a time
	+ If something is important, you have to be willing to stick with it, regardless

### Reflection and Review

* Don’t just “set it and forget it”
	+ Improvement includes fine-tuning habits
	+ Pay attention to and keep working to improve the basics
* Compare notes with others
	+ Look at how your organization is working to improve and also connect with others to get ideas on how they improve
* Invest in digital accessibility culture
	+ Restructure, reallocate, reprioritize, use grants
	+ Pull 1% of resources from wherever possible, give to the leaders and let them drag others along
* Not a question of “if,” it’s a matter of “when.”
	+ Approach accessibility as if you know you’re going to have a complaint filed against you and you’ll be in a much better position to handle it.
	+ If a complaint never comes, you’ve done something right!

## What is the cost of not changing?

## Resources:

* Kate’s Email: kathleen.deforest@oswego.edu
* Accessibility Website: [oswego.edu/accessibility](https://ww1.oswego.edu/accessibility/)
* Tutorials: [oswego.edu/accessibility/written-and-video-tutorials](https://ww1.oswego.edu/accessibility/written-and-video-tutorials)
* Deque University website: [DequeUniversity.com](https://dequeuniversity.com)
* LinkedIn Learning: [Linkedin.com/learning](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/)
* Atomic Habits: [AtomicHabits.com](https://jamesclear.com/atomic-habits)