



Is Your Website a Target for a Discrimination Lawsuit?

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Retailers have gotten used to the idea that they are frequent targets of discrimination lawsuits, but probably didn't expect that they may also be sued for their cyberspace activity. Although online shopping can increase sales for many retail stores, apparently it can also increase the risk for a lawsuit if the Web site is not user-friendly to blind customers.

In California, the National Federation for the Blind filed a class-action lawsuit against Target Corporation claiming that the retail chain discriminates against blind Web site users.

Blind users are able to access and navigate Internet sites with screen-reading software that vocalizes a description of a computer image and provides accessibility to image maps allowing users to jump to different site locations. But Target's Web site allegedly lacks compliant "alt-text" embedded beneath the computer images that allows the software to detect and describe the images to the user.

Although the NFB is not the first to bring a lawsuit dealing with an inaccessible Web site, Target is such a well-known retail chain that these claims could draw attention to the subject matter. Check your Web site today and make sure you are doing everything reasonably possible to permit access by all potential shoppers -- including the disabled.

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