

How the Information Access Group strive towards a culture of accessibility using VisibleThread

Delivering content for plain language and Easy Read



Head Quarters
Melbourne, Australia

Size of Organization
25+ employees

Industry
Communications Agency

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“Accessible information is the way to go”



The **Information Access Group** is a communications agency that specializes in accessibility. They believe that information should be accessible to the widest possible audience. From people with disability, First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities to people with low levels of literacy.

To meet these communication challenges, they offer a wide range of services. These include Easy Read and plain language conversions, focus group testing and accessible web design. The Information Access Group work on projects for Australian Government departments and agencies and disability service providers. They also work on projects for not-for-profit organizations and community groups.

About Merryon Ryall, Editorial Quality Manager



Merryon Ryall is an Editorial Quality Manager at the Information Access Group. Merryon is a plain language expert with over 15 years' experience. She creates engaging content for online and print publications for varied audiences and government clients.

“I’m passionate about writing clear and engaging content that is targeted to the needs of the audience.”

About Cassandra Bulman Editorial Quality Manager



Cassandra Bulman is an Editorial Quality Manager at the Information Access Group. Cassandra writes and edits plain language and Easy Read content for clients and manages editorial projects. Cassandra is passionate about writing and editing.

“Ensuring everyone is able to access information is so important. The work we do here is helping to establish a culture of accessibility. Hopefully one day everyone will provide accessible information.”

Overview

The Information Access Group’s primary objective is to create accessible communications. In 2018, founder Lyndall Thomas discovered VisibleThread. She believed that VT Writer could help them enhance their delivery of accessible communication to their clients.

The Challenge

The Information Access Group needed a solution to help improve their internal quality assurance process. The Editorial Quality Managers are tasked with writing to a plain language reading level of grade 7-9 and for the Easy Read specialty of their business, writing to a reading level of grade 3-6.

Easy Read is a specific style of writing. It involves presenting information in a way that it is easy to understand. This is done through the use of images to support text, large font sizes and plenty of white space. Easy Read is currently used extensively for audiences with disability. However, it is also becoming more widely used for audiences with low literacy levels, in First Nations communities or where English is an additional language – this includes culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people who use Auslan as a first language.

Plain language is a style of writing that’s clear and easy to understand, helping readers to find important information quickly. Features of plain language include everyday language that uses simple words and sentences, active voice and clear headings. It meets the needs of people with early secondary school reading levels. All customer information such as websites, fact sheets, brochures and terms and conditions should be written in plain language.

The Solution

VT Writer was introduced to help the Information Access Group's editorial team with their internal quality assurance process. VT Writer acts as an automatic checker, providing a set of unbiased eyes on the documents they are working on. The core four metrics VT Writer analyze are:

Long Sentences



Passive Voice

Aa

Readability



Grade Level



Readability and Grade Level

The reports that VT Writer provide track the changes made to the content. As the Information Access Group take a collaborative approach when working with their clients, revisions are made along the way involving input from the clients themselves. Through the VT Writer reports, the team can see the impact the changes have on readability levels.

“We use VisibleThread all the time and it's definitely a benefit to us and our work. We can track the document's readability level to see what it started at and then see what we have ended up with. We can then easily relay this to the client.”

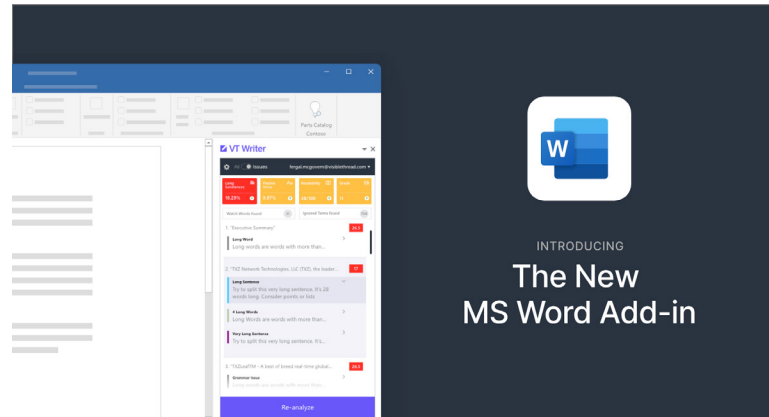
Merryon Ryall.

Passive Voice and Long Sentences

The team find the Passive Voice and Long Sentences scoring metrics very useful. Both elements are key features of Easy Read, along with reducing words that have multiple syllables. Cassandra stated that it is sometimes easy to miss an instance of passive voice, so she finds it great to have it clearly highlighted in the document.

“All of those features in VisibleThread are really helpful in picking up passive voice and sentence length, which can really help when writing for Easy Read.”

Cassandra Bulman



About VT Writer and the VT Writer Microsoft Word Add-In

Clear writing helps to increase accessibility and overall productivity. For organizations that work collaboratively on revisions with their clients, having multiple writers on a piece of communications creates many challenges. These can include inconsistency with single tone of voice and can cause misunderstandings and friction amongst the team. In addition, getting objective quality metrics and adhering to regulatory requirements is essential, particularly in government communications that use complex language.

VT Writer provides teams with features to help overcome these types of challenges in business writing. With the launch of the VT Writer Word Add-in, teams can re-imagine their approach to reviewing business writing in Microsoft Word. This new Microsoft Word Add-in enables users to analyse and edit documents in real time.

“We are excited about the VT Writer Word Add-in that was recently rolled out. It will be very beneficial to the staff members in our team. It will help us advance the quality of our writing and give us objective metrics to work towards.”

Cassandra Bulman

The Impact

The Information Access Group team can show their clients that VT Writer runs the content through a series of checks and then delivers a non-biased readability score. Through the internal scoring system, VT Writer enables the team to carry out their editorial work with confidence that they are meeting the desired reading levels.

Enhancing their internal quality assurance process was a key factor when getting VT Writer on board. Knowing that the content they produce is scored based on the Flesch-Kincaid Model removes any worries of scoring bias.

“Having that last step quality check assists. We often do a few rounds of changes with the clients and having that step checks everything that we’re doing. It helps us make sure that our work is accessible, which is our main goal in the business.”

Cassandra Bulman

While their main aim is to improve writing quality, their team have also seen time saving benefits from uploading large documents in one go.

“Rather than copy and paste sections of a document to check it, being able to check the whole document and also get an overview of the whole document is really great.”

Merryon Ryall



Conclusion

Since 2018, VT Writer has helped the Information Access Group team to improve their internal quality assurance process. Using the objective metrics that VT Writer provides, the Information Access Group is confident that their content is suitable for the different audiences their clients communicate with.

You can [find more information about the work they do on their website.](#)

