

Accessibility by Design

Executive risk in self-service deployments: ADA exposure, inclusivity, and retrofit cost.

Vendor-neutral executive brief | Risk and compliance lens | Reduce legal exposure and customer friction

Key takeaways

- Accessibility is a design requirement, not a post-launch patch.
- Retrofitting accessibility is slower and more expensive than building it in.
- Consistency across locations reduces both legal and operational exposure.
- Accessible UX is usually better UX for everyone.

Accessibility failures create a uniquely damaging risk profile: legal exposure, reputational harm, and operational disruption. Executives should require accessibility to be treated as a core acceptance criterion alongside security and uptime. This brief outlines what to demand from manufacturers, software teams, and service providers to reduce risk.

“If a kiosk excludes customers, it is not self-service - it is self-selection.”

Where accessibility risk appears

- Physical reach, clearance, and approach requirements (height, angles, wheelchair access).
- Touch targets, contrast, and readability across lighting conditions.
- Non-visual access: screen reader compatibility, audio output, and privacy.
- Input alternatives: tactile keypads, assistive navigation, clear error recovery.
- Inconsistent configurations across sites due to ad-hoc substitutions.

What executives should require

- Accessibility criteria defined before design - not after procurement.
- Documented conformance approach and test evidence (process and results).
- Accessible modes that can be triggered easily (and do not require staff intervention).
- Maintenance plan: accessibility remains intact after updates and component swaps.
- Field procedures that preserve accessibility during repairs and replacements.

Risk reduction checklist (executive level)

Area	Ask for evidence of...	Why it matters
Hardware	Reach/clearance planning and serviceable design	Prevents physical exclusion and retrofit
Software	Accessible UX patterns and assistive support	Reduces complaints and abandonment
Operations	Consistency and change control across sites	Avoids 'one bad site' exposure
Support	Training + verification after service visits	Prevents drift over time

Practical rule: audit accessibility after major software updates and after any hardware/peripheral substitution.

Executive sign-off questions

- Is accessibility a non-negotiable acceptance criterion in our procurement process?
- What is our validation method before rollouts and after updates?
- Can accessible mode be activated independently without staff assistance?
- How do we prevent configuration drift across sites after repairs?
- Who owns compliance risk: legal, IT, operations, or the vendor?

Accessibility is the rare requirement that reduces legal risk and improves customer experience at the same time.