



Lessons Learned

Building an accessible support team



[Kyndra LoCoco](#), Accessibility Partner & Community Programs Manager, Google

“...As long as there are
barriers for some, there’s
still work to be done.”

Sundar Pichai

CEO of Alphabet & Google

Summary

Google is committed to making accessibility a core consideration from the earliest stages of product design through release. In 2017, the Accessibility team continued this promise by building a more accessible support team to help people who use assistive technology with their Google products. The team also answers questions about accessibility features and functionalities in Google products.

In an effort to provide resources for more companies to build their support teams with accessibility in mind, we're sharing key lessons we learned from building the Google Disability Support team.

A special thanks to Microsoft, who [helped us](#) every step of the way.

Support Google's customers

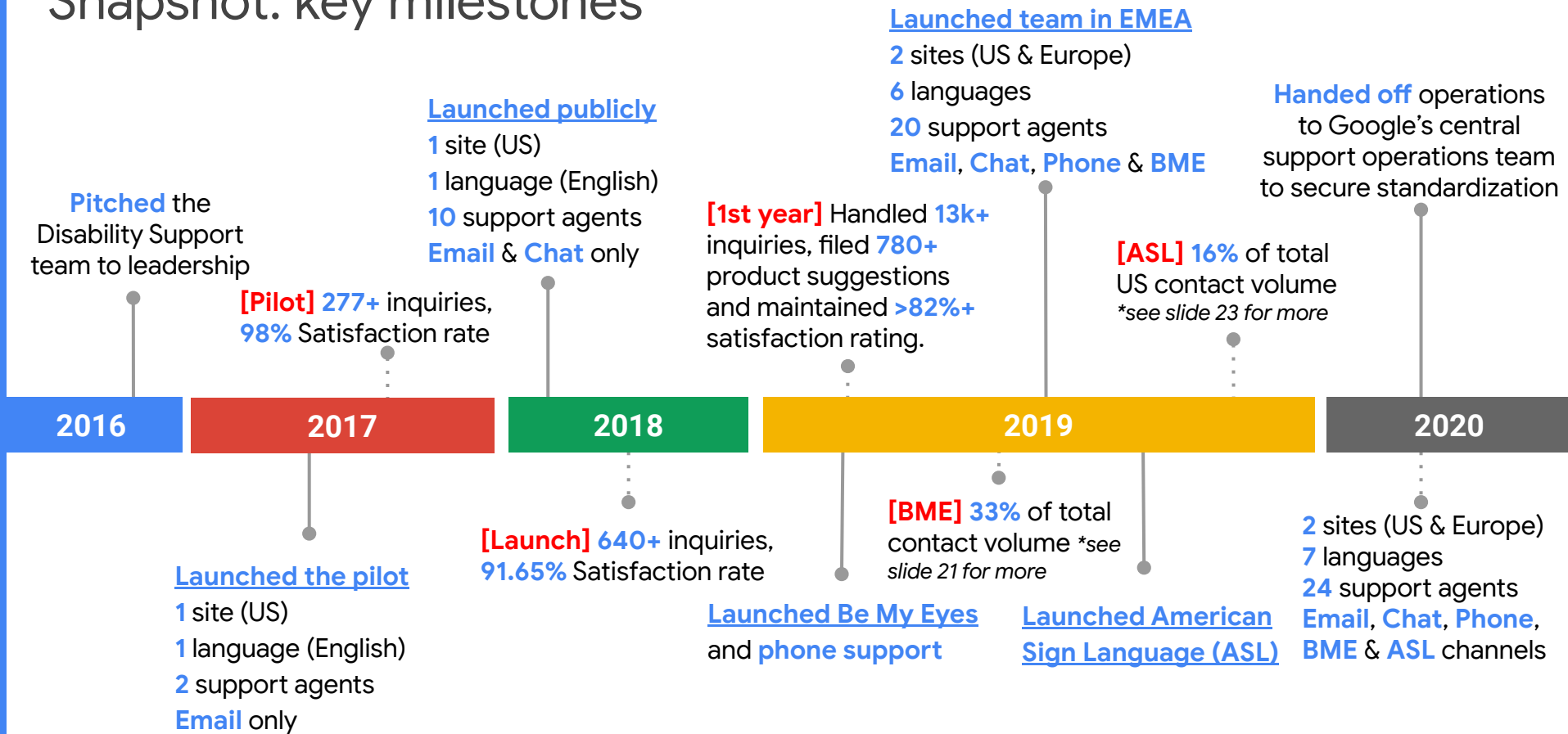
Google support agents provide 1:1 support to help answer and troubleshoot questions related to accessibility and/or assistive technology.

Improve accessibility within Google products

Google support agents reproduce and escalate potential issues to product teams. They also highlight top user feedback and feature requests.



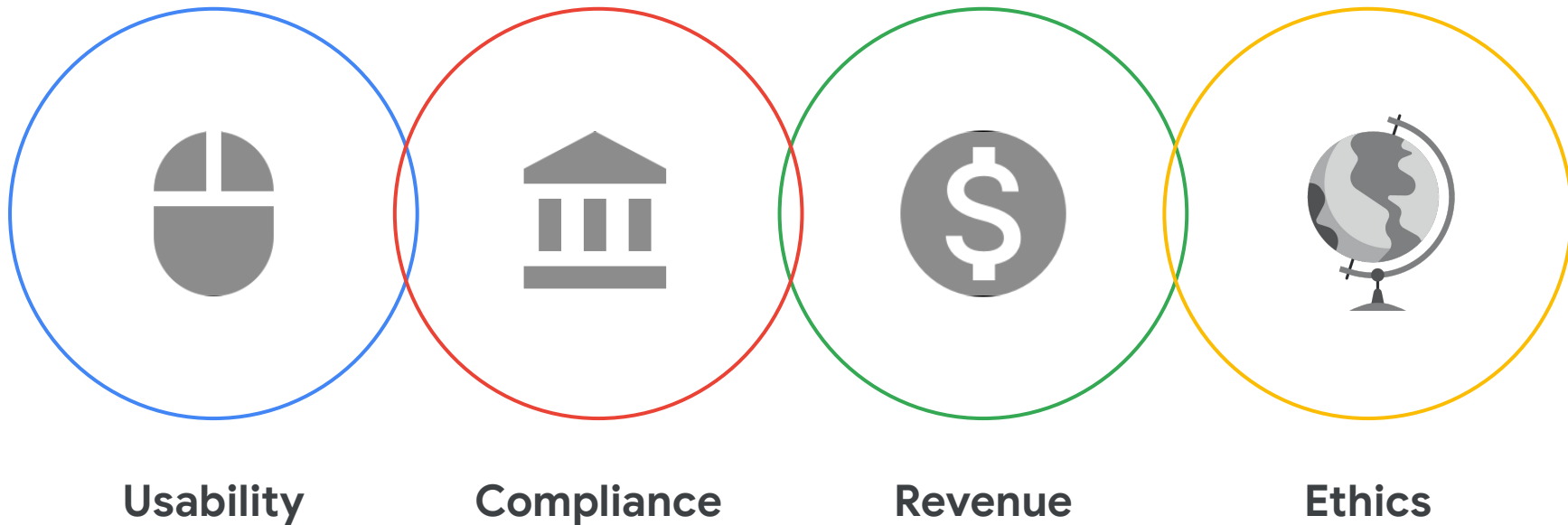
Snapshot: key milestones



**Intentionally did not “market” the Disability Support team until BME & ASL launched in an effort to control volume & quality* Google

Pitch: secure leadership buy-in

Why is accessibility **important**?



By the numbers

1B+

People live with
some form of
disability ([WHO](#))

900M

It is estimated that by 2050
over 900 million people
alone will have disabling
hearing loss ([WHO](#))

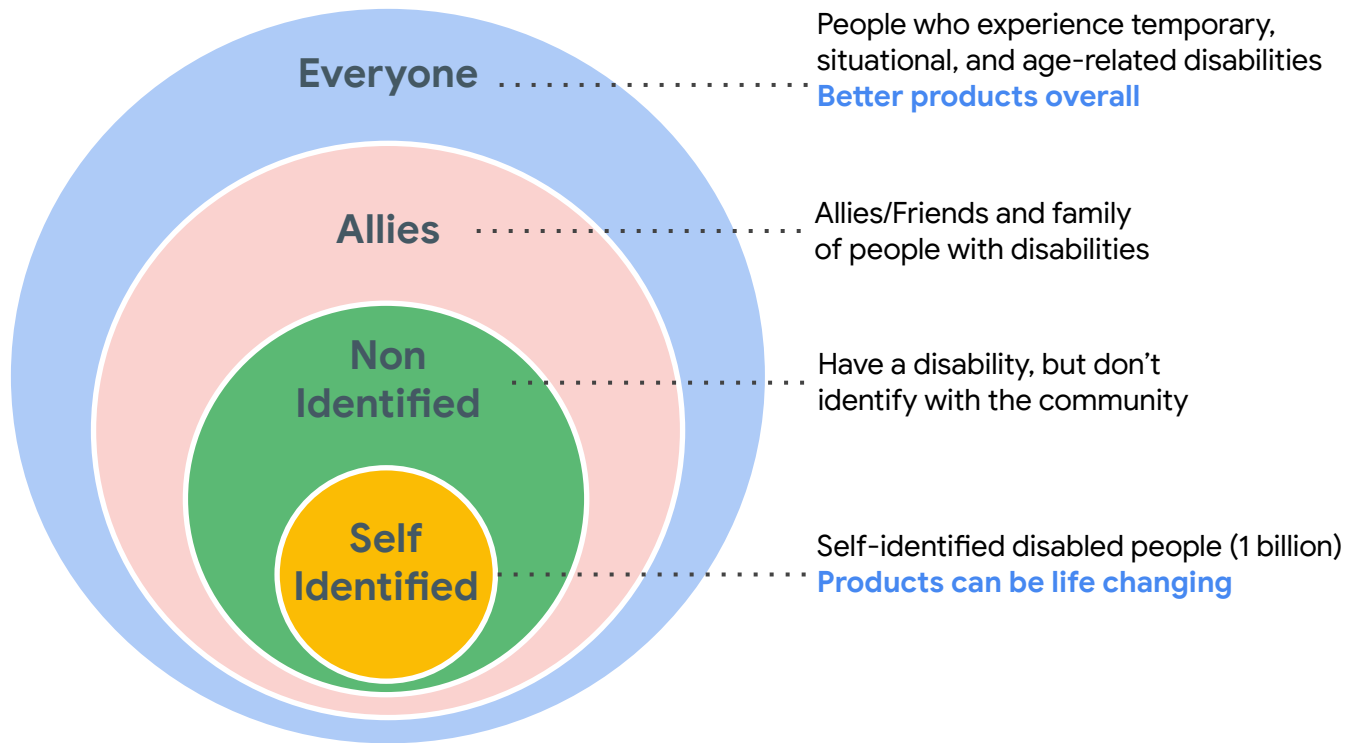
80%

80% of disabilities are
acquired between the ages
of 18-64, the workforce age
([Global Economics of Disability Report](#))

But disability affects **everyone**

7.7 Billion

1 Billion



It's also just **good for business**

\$8T

Together with their friends and family, people with disabilities have a spending power of over \$8 trillion

[*\(Global Economics of Disability Report\)*](#)

87%

Of people will purchase a product because a company advocated for an issue they cared about

[*\(Cone Communications CSR Study\)*](#)

80%

Of millennials expect companies to make a public commitment to good corporate citizenship.

[*\(Horizon Media\)*](#)



"Seeing these products and how they're helping people with disabilities shows me that Google is for the people."

- Consumer, Los Angeles

Major points comparison

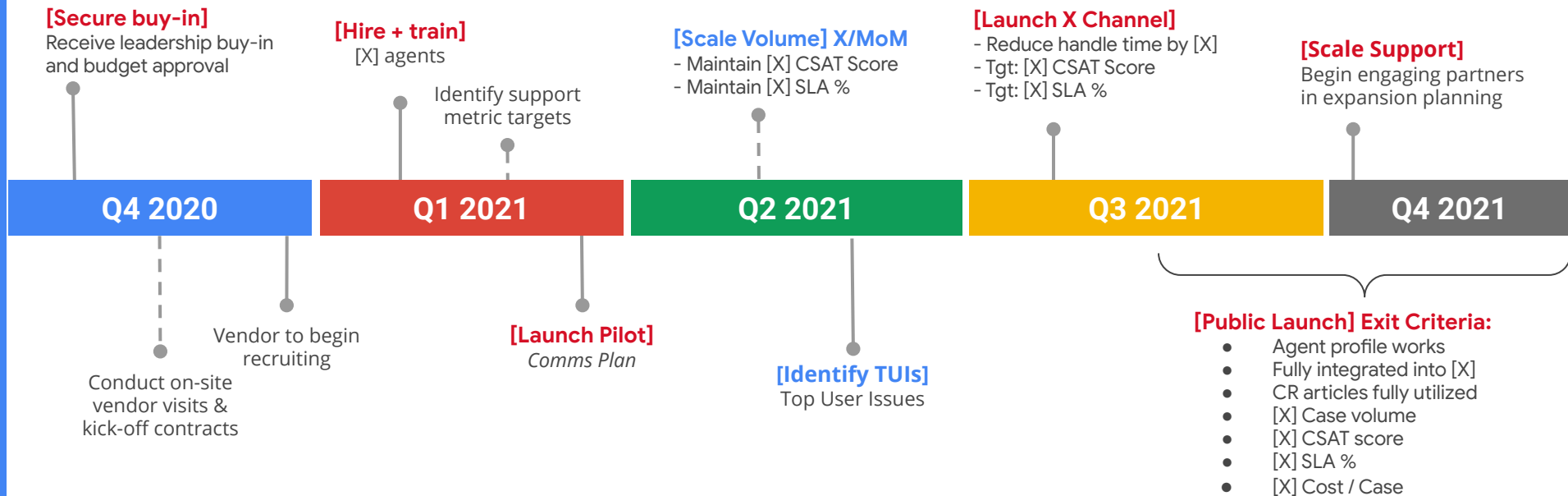
Depending on your organizational structure there may be a number of ways to build your support team. Consider providing leadership options through a major points comparison.

	Scalable	Short-term costs	Long-term costs	
Hire temps for pilot		\$X	\$X	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pros:• Cons:
Leverage (X) team		\$X	\$X	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pros:• Cons:
Train existing CSRs		\$X	\$X	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pros:• Cons:
Dedicated team		\$X	\$X	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pros:• Cons:

**The Google Disability Support team was built as a dedicated centralized team allowing scalability through deeper integration efforts across Google's support operations while maintaining quality and standardization centrally.*

Identify key milestones & timelines

Consider measuring impact by identifying ***exit criteria** and **key objectives** throughout a projected timeline. High-level example objectives and exit criteria below.



**Exit criteria for the Google Disability Support team references scaling outside of an incubation center and into public launch*

Key lesson learned: disability vs. accessibility

“Disability” is widely used, accepted and searched for globally ([Google Trends](#)). Consider naming your support team or dedicated line with “Disability” instead of “Accessibility” to bring clarity to the focus of the team and reduce out of scope cases (OOS).

Compared breakdown by region

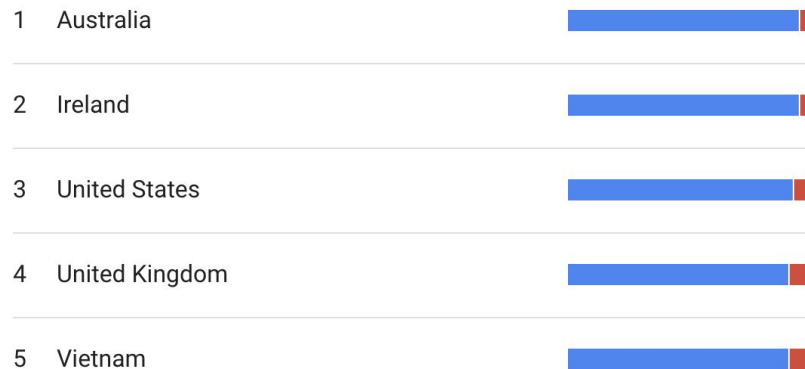
Region ▼ ⬇ ⏪ ⏩ 🔗

● Disability ● Accessibility



Color intensity represents percentage of searches [LEARN MORE](#)

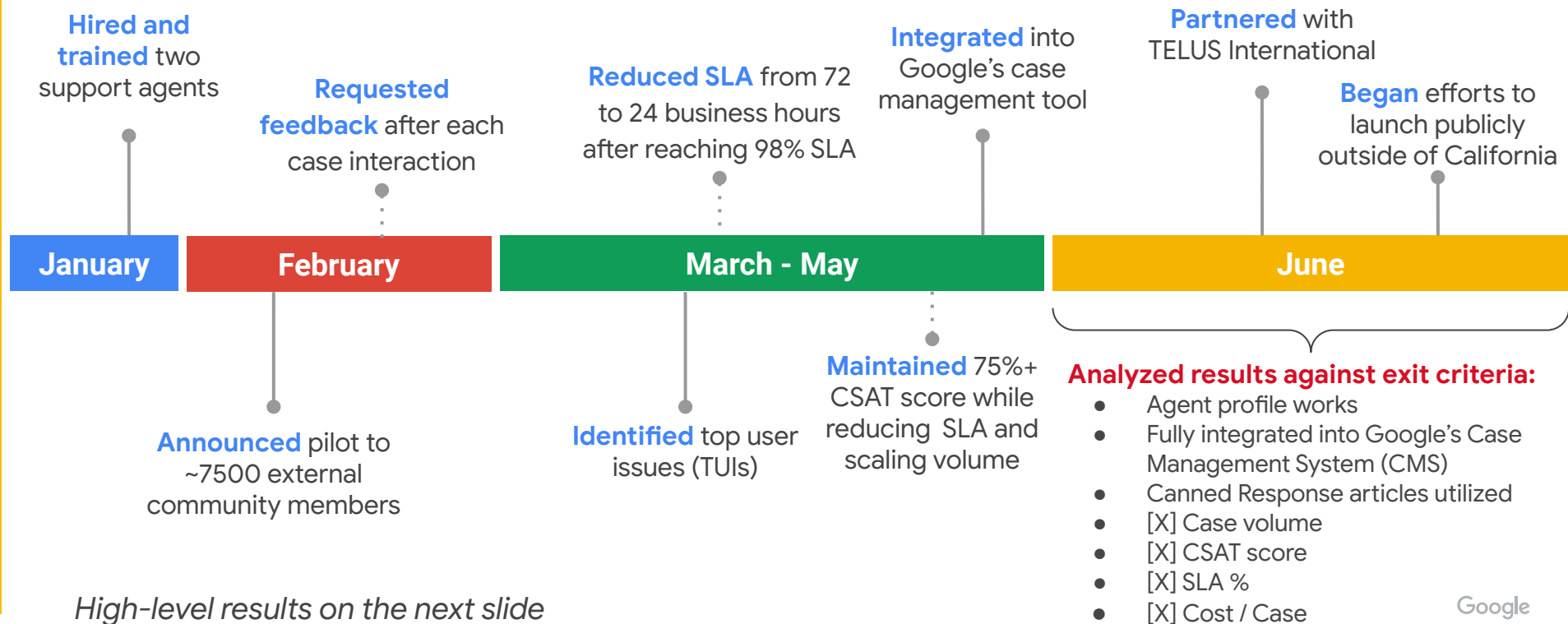
Sort: Interest for Disability ▼



The Central Accessibility team saw 70%+ OOS contacts on “contact us forms” prior to launching the **Disability Support team*

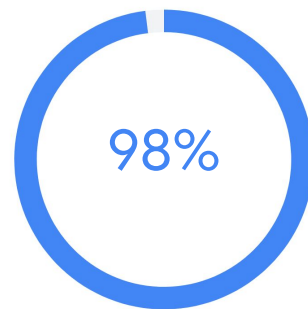
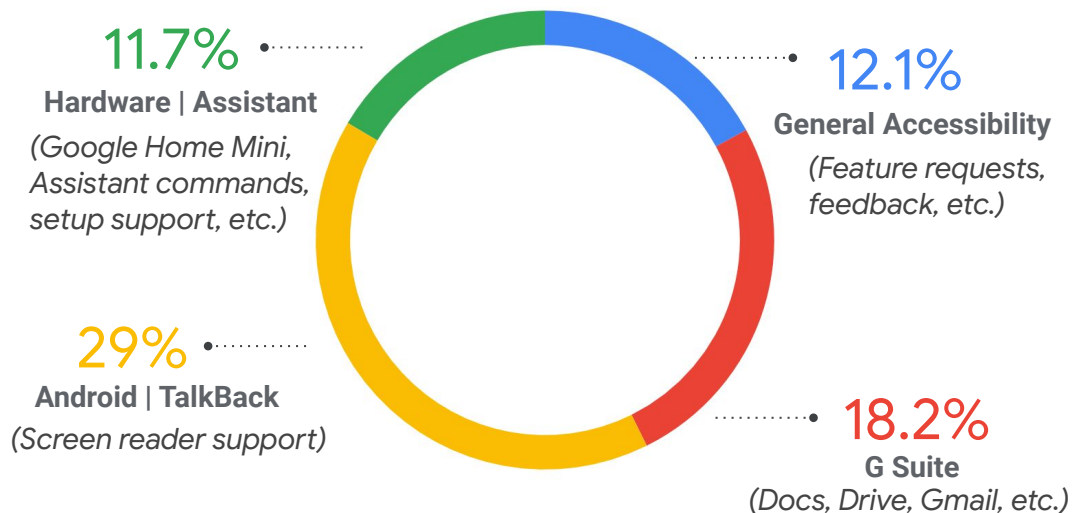
Pilot: prove the business model

Running a Pilot: start small, fail fast, learn faster

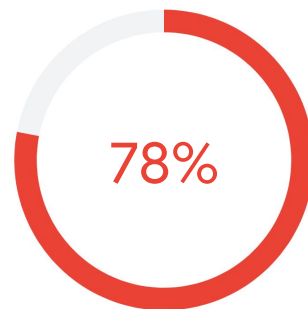


What we learned: **by the numbers**

*Top User Issues (TUIs)



Of case interactions were replied to within 72 hours



Of people were either satisfied or extremely satisfied

*TUIs were key for determining cost projections by product team and XFN leadership buy-in required

What we learned: **by user feedback**



“This! is fantastic! I can't wait to give this a try! Looking forward to chat and phone options!”



“Really a very good initiative. I do hope support will be offered in other languages as it is expanded.”

Key lessons learned: build with and for people with disabilities

1 Hire people who personally use assistive technology

Even when providing the correct answer, community members noticed the support agents didn't use assistive technology themselves: "The answer was correct but I can tell the agent doesn't use (assistive technology) themselves since [they] didn't provide workarounds a user themselves would know."

2 Identify and partner with experienced vendors

When partnering with a vendor, do your due-diligence. Conduct on-site visits, speak with existing support agents (without management present), shadow existing processes, etc. Look for vendors who already have strong inclusive programs in place such as [The Chicago Lighthouse](#) and [TELUS International](#) (current vendor). The disability Support team also partnered with the [American Foundation for the Blind \(AFB\)](#) to train support agents.

3 Ensure your support tools are accessible

Ensure your support tools are accessible. Conduct thorough accessibility testing on your own support channels and tools. Go above standard testing to determine both usability and usefulness. Work with your engineering team to prioritize fixes where needed prior to launch - if available, prioritize it as a launch blocker.

4 Meet people where they are

Typical support channels should be available, but think outside the box. Look to work with partners and vendors who already have existing communities (read more about this on the next slide).

Launch: meet people where they are

Key lesson learned: meet people where they are

At the time of launch, we offered multiple support channels, limited language support and hour coverage. Volume was minimal and the average handle time was higher than other support products across Google. Essentially, we didn't feel like we were **connecting with the community** in the best way we could. We looked to partner with companies like [Be My Eyes](#) and [Connect Direct](#) to improve this.



PHONE



CHAT



EMAIL



HELP CENTER



SOCIAL MEDIA



FORUMS



FEEDBACK

g.co/disabilitysupport | g.co/help/accessibility | [@googleaccess](https://twitter.com/googleaccess)



33%

Of total volume

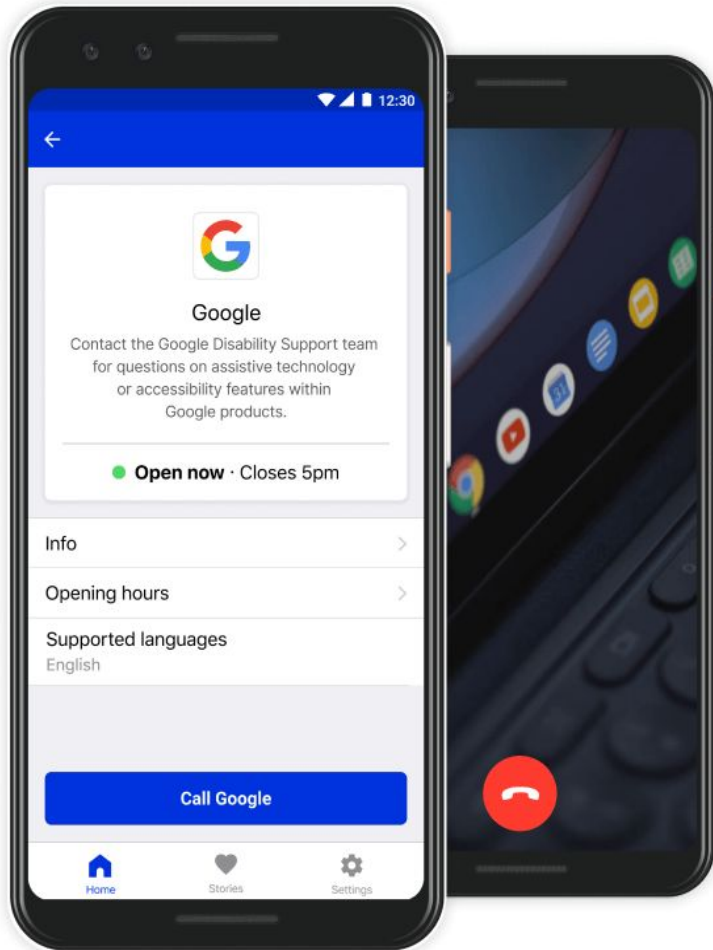
68%↓

Shorter average handle time
**compared to phone*

90%

Customer satisfaction rating

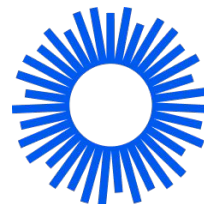
No product integration required



Partnering together: Google, Microsoft & Be My Eyes



Microsoft



be my
eyes

g.co/blindsupport



16%

Of total US volume

83% ↓

Shorter average handle time

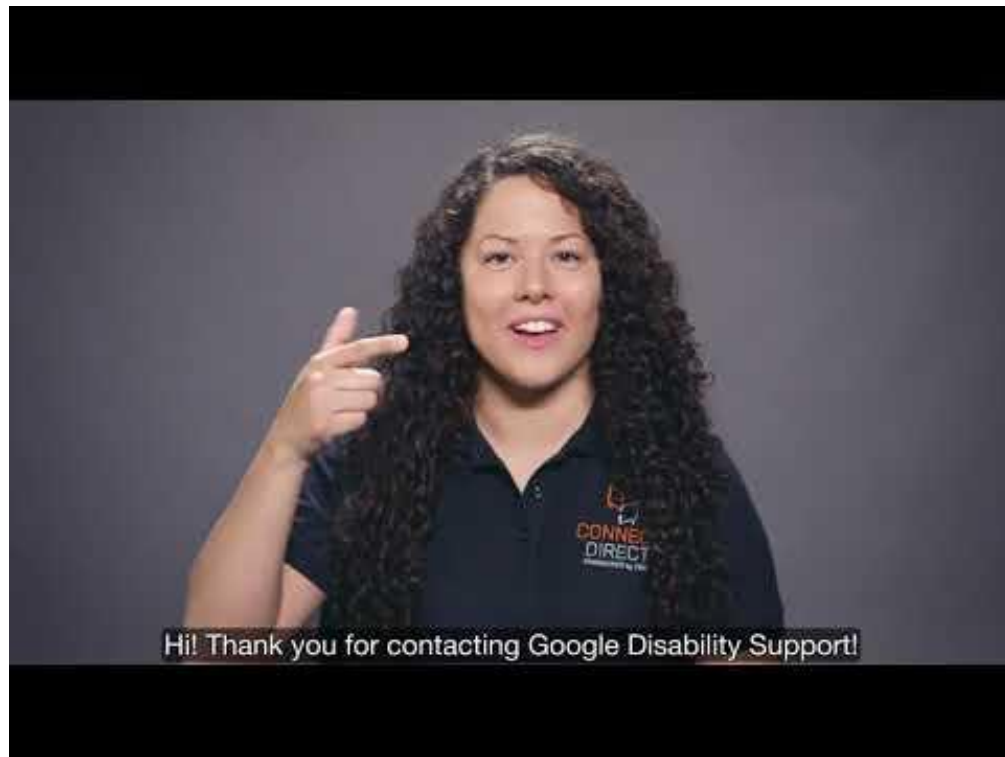
**compared to phone*

92.86%

Customer satisfaction rating



ASL Now: supported through Connect Direct



ASL NOW

g.co/disabilitysupport

Scale: think outside the box

Key lesson learned: scaling outside the US

Consider cultural differences

In addition to the typical forecast planning (i.e., cost per case, headcount, time zone, languages, etc.), consider **cultural differences** and the ability to recruit experienced support agents.

Consider places that meet all of your requirements in addition to proven **positive cultural perception for people with disabilities** (i.e., accessibility laws, typical jargon usage, etc.)



**In addition to the US office, the Google Disability Support team is located in Ireland*

Welcome to the helpful home



“Hey Google, open Be My Eyes for [Company name]”



Other ways to leverage your support team

1 Engineering shadowing sessions:

Set up on-site and/or virtual visits between engineers and customer support agents. Getting 1:1 time between engineers and their end users is invaluable for product development.

2 Use recordings for feedback:

Consider recording support interactions (with the approval of the user) for User Research and Development teams to receive product feedback. Note, both Google's partners, [Be My Eyes](#) and [Connect Direct](#) offer this option.

3 Employee to employee support:

Consider offering employees who have disabilities *additional* support through your existing channels in their day-to-day environment.

4 Deeper integration across support teams:

If you're like Google and you have a number of support teams across your organization, consider identifying and training "accessibility champions" across each team in addition to a centralized team.

Thank You



g.co/disabilitysupport