ORACLE
Digital Experience
Agency

An Oracle Digital Experience Agency Checklist

Accessibility & Inclusive Design Ideas to Explore

Checklists can inspire you, help you identify gaps, allow you to take inventory, and provide an easy-to-follow action plan. At Oracle Digital Experience Agency, we use checklists all the time with our clients. In fact, we love them so much that we wanted to share some of our most useful checklists, including this one about accessibility and inclusive design ideas.

Established by laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA), accessibility is the expectation that brands create in-store, online, marketing, and other experiences that are accessible to people with disabilities. Inclusive design is the realization that many more customers benefit from such accommodations beyond those with permanent challenges. That's because nearly everyone experiences temporary and situational challenges that can be eased by design accommodations.

These challenges come in four major forms:

1. Visual
2. Hearing
3. Cognitive
4. Motor

On the pages that follow, we list accommodations for each of those challenges, along with advice from some of our hundreds of digital marketing experts. Some of these items entail one-time changes, such as adjustments to your website code or to your email templates. However, most involve being thoughtful about every experience your brand creates.

As an industry, we still have a long way to go to ensure that all of our digital customer experiences can be accessed by all of our customers universally. It's up to us to recognize this is not a nice-to-have goal, but a must-have.

We hope this checklist inspires you to explore ways to welcome the broadest possible audience to engage with your brand. And, of course, if you'd like assistance, we're always here to help. Talk to your Oracle account manager, visit us online, or reach out to us any time at OracleAgency_us@Oracle.com.

Lauren Gannon
Vice President of Agency Services,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

Tips for using this checklist

- ✓ **Check off** the accommodations you've already made or make regularly as part of your production process. When an accommodation can be made to multiple channels, consider noting which channels you've addressed already.

- ○ **Circle** the accommodations you want to implement. When you're done going through the entire list, rank all of your circled accommodations by level of effort and level of impact to help prioritize implementation.

Visual Considerations

When designing your brand experiences, consider how easily they can be engaged with by people with *permanent challenges*, such as color blindness, low vision, and blindness. Many of the accommodations you'd make to help those people will also aid people with *temporary challenges*, such as an eye injury or cataracts, as well as those experiencing *situational challenges*, such as being in bright or low-light environments. And while dyslexia is not a visual disability, many of the adjustments we make for those with visual challenges support those users, too. Here are a few ways to make your experiences more visually accessible and inclusive:

- ☐ **Use legible text.** A font size of about 16 pixels is a good baseline, with headlines and subhead styles needing to be considerably more prominent. Better yet, define your font sizes (and line heights) in ems instead of points. Ems are flexible text units that allow users to zoom in or scale content without loss of content or other issues. Remember that legibility should extend to your legalese, disclaimers, and administrative text, too.

- ☐ **Pick a legible font.** It's best to stick with more standard fonts like simple sans-serifs, as they are usually easier to read. While you're selecting your **font stack**, also think about their weight. Thinner fonts are going to be harder to see, even if you are meeting color contrast requirements. Use decorative and script fonts sparingly, if at all, as they can be incredibly hard for folks to read.

- ☐ **Use HTML text**, rather than embedding graphical text in images. This allows screen readers and voice assistants to read your text. It also lets people easily adjust the type size on their screens, a valuable option for people with less-than-perfect eyesight.

- ☐ **Use semantic markup for marketing and transactional emails.** Gone are the days where emails are built using only tables. Modern email development uses semantic markup, such as heading and paragraph tags, to ensure content is more easily read and understood by assistive technologies.

> "The great news is we've been seeing design trends move toward larger text, with many brands upping their body copy size to the range of 18 to 22 pixels. While these trends may be following the aesthetic styles of the moment, it has the added benefit of making text more accessible and legible for many."

Nick Cantu
Creative Director,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "Selecting an appropriate font stack requires careful consideration, especially in email development where custom fonts fail in some email clients. You'll want to research web safe fonts to understand which ones are compatible with which operating systems. A valuable resource for this is **CSS Font Stack**, which details each font's compatibility with iOS and Windows."

Brian Johnson
Web & Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "My daughter, who has dyslexia, often reads emails and online articles using a text-to-speech plugin on her phone, which is similar to a screen reader. Semantic markup and live text are critical to her ability to fully comprehend the content she is reading."

Sarah Gallardo
Lead Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

- [ ] **Use *alt* text** for images on your website and in your email, social, and other digital campaigns to provide a plain text alternative to non-text content. This helps viewers using screen readers, as well as viewers who have images turned off or blocked. If you have graphics containing text, use *alt* text to replicate that text. Images used to set a mood, however, don't necessarily need *alt* text. Just include an *alt* tag and leave it empty (alt=""). It's important to note that any image that is linked must have *alt* text, regardless of its content, and that *alt* text needs to describe where the link will take the user.

- [ ] **Use calls-to-action that stand out** by separating CTAs from surrounding text. Instead of image-based buttons, use **accessible buttons**. Make text links stand out from the surrounding text by using color and styling (e.g., bold, underline). When appropriate, also consider including an arrow at the end of your text link. Whatever approach you take, don't rely solely on color to make your text link stand out.

- [ ] **Expand CTAs for screen reader users.** Call-to-action links are usually short and sweet, but that brevity can be confusing for screen reader users. Make your CTAs clearer by adding an aria-label to vague links. So, for example, you could add an aria-label to your "Register Now" link that says, "Register for the Salsa Dance class on October 9th."

- [ ] **Review the plain text version of your emails.** Whether you're aware of it or not, your email service provider is automatically sending a plain text version along with every HTML email you create and send. However, that plain text version can vary wildly from provider to provider. Sometimes, it merely states that your subscriber's email client couldn't read HTML and directs them to click a link to go to a web-hosted version of the HTML email. Other times, the plain text version is an actual version of your HTML email, but without the images and other coding. Do some investigating and determine which kind of plain text email experience you've been sending, then consider changes.

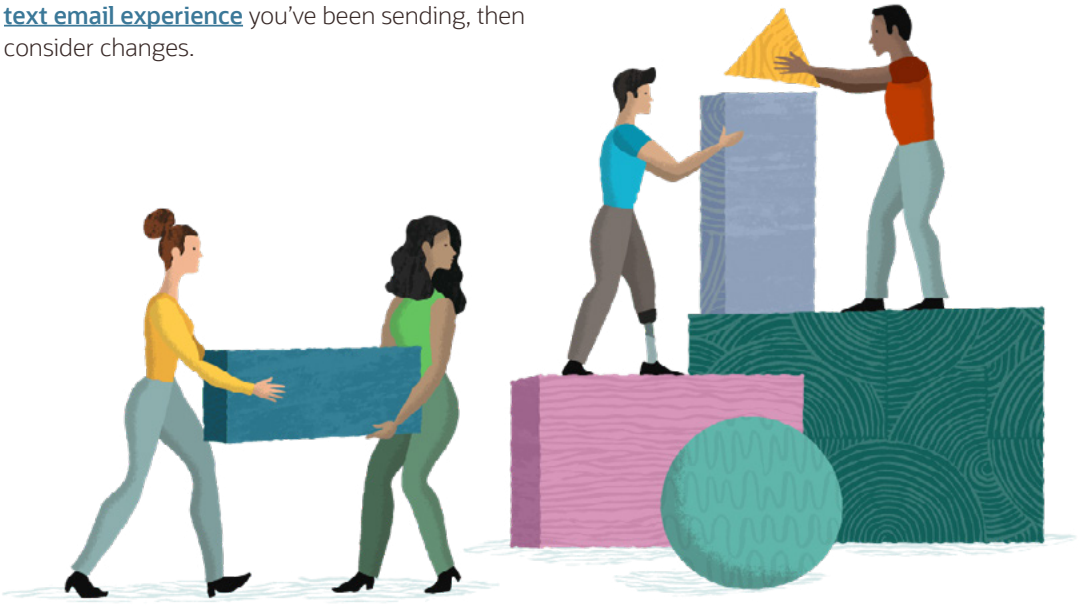
- [ ] **Have a high color contrast for text, graphics, and other elements in your content.** Black text on a white background is the easiest to read. It also adapts the best to **dark mode**. Be particularly wary of overlaying text on an image with lots of color variations. If you're unsure, use a **contrast checker**, and aim for a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text, per **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**. Using high-contrast text also helps people with color blindness, which affects roughly 8% of men.

> "Many brands put a tremendous amount of time and energy into developing brand guidelines to help drive consistency across channels. However, we've found that accessibility standards such as minimum type size and color contrast levels are often overlooked. We work with our clients to ensure their brand guidelines address the needs of this larger potential audience."

Scott Multer
Executive Creative Director,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "It's an email accessibility myth that people with disabilities read the plain text version of an email. Most visually impaired users use the same common email clients as everyone else, and most of those don't even let you choose the plain text version for reading anymore. It's good to ensure the plain text version is correct, of course, but this is more of an inclusivity issue than accessibility issue."

Sarah Gallardo
Lead Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency



- [ ] **Optimize for dark mode.** Platform providers don't always make it easy for brands to honor dark mode. That's especially true of email inbox providers, some of whom fully invert colors in dark mode, while others only partially invert colors. But regardless of those implementation difficulties, dark mode is extremely popular with consumers, many of whom prefer it when they're in low-light environments. So, that means brands need to embrace and respect dark mode by making savvy dark mode design choices.

- [ ] **Use responsive design**, which helps your content better adapt to desktop and mobile environments. If you don't use it, understand why you're not, such as having a tiny audience on desktops, for instance. And while you're at it, make sure you're setting your mobile dimensions at 100%. If you set it to a specific pixel width, it can cause some smaller devices to scale the mobile email, causing legibility issues.

- [ ] **Be careful with interactive elements.** Keyboard and screen reader users cannot interact with or activate many existing interactive email components. However, Oracle Digital Experience Agency worked with Oracle's global accessibility team to create an accessible slider that meets accessibility criteria and works in many email clients.

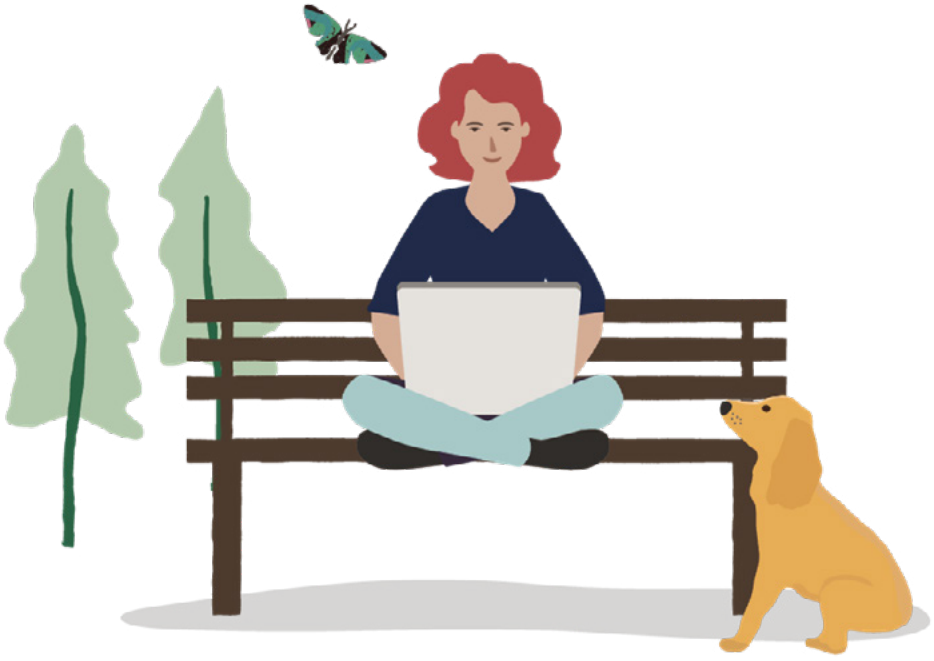
- [ ] **Include audio descriptions in your videos**, so users with visual disabilities can still understand what is happening in terms of action.

> "As we age, our eyes become increasingly sensitive to bright light. (I know this from experience, thanks to years of staring at computer screens!) Dark mode helps to mitigate the barrage of bright light emanating from phones, monitors, and other devices—so it's no surprise that many people keep it enabled. When your brand optimizes for dark mode, it signals that you respect the comfort and physical well-being of your customers."

Jack Clemens
Senior Copywriter,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "Just because your website or email is responsive doesn't mean it's mobile-friendly. I've seen plenty of cases where brands are using overly small fonts—even two-column layouts—on the mobile versions of their responsive designs. That can cause high abandonment rates and low engagement."

Chad S. White
Head of Research,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency



- [ ] **Make your forms accessible.** Provide form labels for each input and make sure grouped form controls are organized together using a fieldset and legend to provide additional context for screen reader users. Confirm that every part of your form is keyboard accessible so users can navigate to and fill in each form element. Carefully consider your error messaging, which should not only notify users that an error has been made, but explain what the error is and how to rectify it.

> "Accessibility in web and email design is paramount to me, both professionally and personally. My wife, who is visually impaired, relies on features like dark mode and legible fonts to engage with content. Ensuring these elements are present allows her—and others with similar challenges—to connect and interact meaningfully with the digital world. I'm dedicated to coding content in an accessible way to make this connection possible for everyone."

Brian Johnson
Web & Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "Inclusivity goes well beyond simply meeting the legal requirements of the ADA and other laws. Thoughtful dark mode design, images-off design, and responsive design are part of ensuring every user's needs are met."

Daniel Castady
Senior Web & Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

Need help identifying inclusivity and accessibility gaps?
Oracle Digital Experience Agency's Accessibility Audit provides a comprehensive review of your brand's digital marketing campaigns and recommends fixes and enhancements. For more information, talk to your Oracle account manager, **visit us online**, or reach out to us at **OracleAgency_us@oracle.com**.

> "The Accessibility Audit is a great way to see where you are as a brand and how you are catering to your customers. We've done them for some of my clients and we were able to identify low, medium, and high priority opportunities to enable a phased implementation approach. For one client that was adopting a modular email architecture (MEA), we did the Accessibility Audit during the discovery phase of the MEA project, which allowed the modular architecture to incorporate accessibility best practices at the coding level."

Elizabeth Thomas
Senior Art Director for Creative Services,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

Hearing Considerations

When designing your brand experiences, consider how easily they can be engaged with by people with *permanent challenges*, such as deafness or poor hearing. Many of the accommodations you'd make for those people also benefit people with *temporary challenges*, such as an ear infection or ruptured eardrum, and people with *situational challenges*, such as those in loud environments or ones where they can't turn on audio. Here are a few ways to make your experiences more auditorily accessible and inclusive:

- ☐ **Include captions/subtitles on your videos.** Replicate all dialogue and key non-spoken sounds (e.g., rain, wind) with text captions. Also use captions/subtitles for animated gifs that are representing or emulating video content.
- ☐ **Provide transcripts** of video and audio content, particularly for podcasts, webinars, and video interviews. Including timestamps allows readers to reference the portions of the video or audio they're most interested in.
- ☐ **Any audio-only content must also be described visually**, so these concepts of captions and transcripts apply to audio-only content as well.

> "Leveraging AI tools to create transcripts from podcasts and webinars is a great application of AI technology and will dramatically save time and improve your customer experience."

Lauren Gannon
Vice President of Agency Services,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "I retain information better when reading versus listening, and I also tend to be able to read faster than it would take to watch a video. The ability to read a transcript helps me stay efficient."

Emily Lasnier
Copywriter,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "Captions and subtitles are massively mainstream. The majority of mobile users regularly **watch videos with the sound off** and the majority of young adults **watch TV with subtitles on**. This is a great example of an accommodation that has found a very broad, appreciative audience."

Chad S. White
Head of Research,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

> "I have a really hard time understanding different accents when I'm watching videos online due to minor auditory processing issues, so I tend to always include closed captioning in my video experiences. It's such a relief to have that included in videos."

Sarah Gallardo
Lead Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

Cognitive Considerations

When designing your brand experiences, consider how easily they can be engaged with by people with *permanent challenges*, such as learning disabilities like dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which affect about one-fifth of the population. Memory impairments, especially in older people, should also be considered. Many of the accommodations you'd make for those folks also help people with *temporary challenges*, such as a concussion, and people experiencing *situational challenges*, such as those who are tired, in a hurry, or distracted. Here are a few ways to make your experiences more cognitively accessible and inclusive:

- ☐ **Use a recognizable *from* name.** Your sender name is the most important element of your message. Unfamiliar names are viewed with great suspicion, so ensure yours are highly recognizable. When it comes to using **your brand name or a person's name as the sender name**, most of the time you want to use the former, as that will be more recognizable. Using a person's name can add a personal touch, but only if that person is familiar to the recipient. **Using a *from* name extension** can allow you to use a hybrid approach, as well as other tactics to get more out of your sender name.

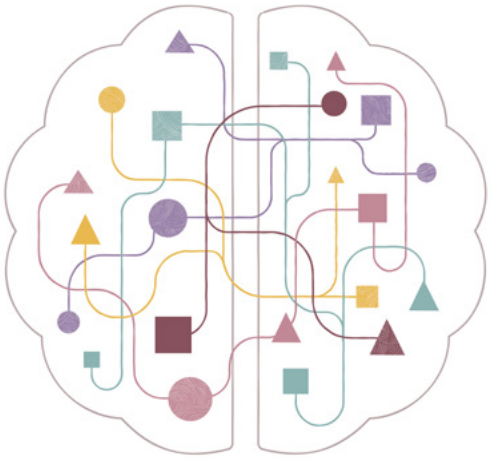
> "When developing your customer communications, it's important to consistently use a 'from' line your recipients will instantly recognize as a trusted brand or person that's relevant to them. This is even more important considering different cognitive challenges your audience may have. You don't want them to second guess who you are."

Scott Multer
Executive Creative Director,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

- ☐ **Feature the most important information prominently.** In your emails, SMS messages, and other messages, front-load your subject lines so key details appear in the first few words. In your body copy, the most important information may not necessarily be first, but it should be the most prominent. Use larger content blocks, larger fonts, and design elements to spotlight your primary message.
- ☐ **Favor smaller words.** Shorter words are easier to understand.
- ☐ **Be mindful of creative language.** Be thoughtful in your use of colloquialisms, pop culture references, and slang that might be confusing or alienating to certain age groups, non-native speakers, and others. Be as direct and clear as you can.

> "Most digital marketing campaigns—and especially emails—have too much information crammed into too small of a space. That makes them hard to scan and understand. Simplify the message. Make it easy to understand quickly, and ensure every element has a purpose. That will result in a more thoughtful experience for the customer."

Nick Cantu
Creative Director,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency



- [ ] **Space out your text.** Characters that are too close together can be challenging to read. Similarly, lines of text that are too long or not spaced far enough apart can be difficult to follow from line to line.
- [ ] **Use small content blocks.** Shorter sentences and shorter paragraphs are better. Consider modeling your text after newspaper copy, which is known for paragraphs that often consist of just one or two sentences. The key is to focus the content and not overwhelm your audience.
- [ ] **Make the purpose of a link clear** by using clear and concise call-to-action (CTA) language that describes what happens next. Avoid using vague CTAs like "click here." Invest time into optimizing your CTAs.
- [ ] **Provide calendar reminders**. If you're asking people to tune in, attend, or do anything in the future, link to a calendar reminder to help them remember.
- [ ] **Space out your content blocks.** Content blocks that are too close together can be seen as part of the same block and be confusing. The danger of this is higher if content blocks aren't separated by lines or other design elements.
- [ ] **Organize your message with a logical sequence** for the content. Have a clear and meaningful progression so it's easy to understand.
- [ ] **Be careful with animated gifs.** Looping animated gifs can cause a lot of problems for people that have trouble focusing, like those with ADHD. For instance, loop animations can be so distracting that some people have trouble reading the nearby text. More critically, certain combinations of flashing colors can cause seizures in folks with epilepsy. For that reason, we recommend all animated gifs stop looping after 5 seconds.

"The rule for great marketing copy is generally to write what you want to say and then cut the number of words in half. For email and many other digital marketing channels, you'll then want to cut the number of words in half again. That's hard work for marketers, but that effort makes it much easier for our audience to understand what we're asking of them."

Chad S. White
Head of Research,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

"My oldest daughter has a rare sleep disorder that makes it really hard for her to stay on top of dates and times, as a result she uses numerous alarms and calendar events on her phone. Letting users have the option to add reminders to their calendars can be life changing!"

Sarah Gallardo
Lead Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

"Inclusive design may seem revolutionary. However, a brand doesn't grow and expand without their customers, and inclusive design helps you acquire and retain more customers. Given that, it's no surprise that a lot of digital marketing best practices coincide with accessibility best practices, such as clear messaging hierarchies, using small content blocks, and front-loading information."

Elizabeth Thomas
Senior Art Director for Creative Services,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

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Motor Considerations

When designing your brand experiences, consider how easily they can be engaged with by people with *permanent challenges*, such as missing a hand or arm or having hand tremors. Many of those accommodations also make engaging with your brand easier for those with *temporary challenges*, such as having an arm in a cast or sling, and those with *situational challenges*, such as a person only having their off-hand free because they're holding a baby, carrying a bag, or holding onto a subway pole. Here are a few ways to make your experiences more accessible and inclusive for people with motor limitations:

- ☐ **Avoid clustering call-to-action links.** Especially when creating mobile experiences, put plenty of space between your links to avoid mis-taps and mis-clicks. Pay particular attention to your navigation bars, recovery modules, and administrative links, which traditionally have high link densities.
- ☐ **Use full-width buttons on mobile.** Regardless of whether a person is using their right or left hand, they should be able to easily click your primary calls-to-action. Buttons that span or nearly span the full width of the mobile screen make this possible.
- ☐ **Ensure the entire CTA button is clickable.** Many code frameworks use CTA code that focuses on rendering, and not functionality. Users with mobility issues may have a hard time activating CTA links when the entire CTA is not clickable.

> "My best friend's dad has Parkinson's and at a recent dinner he shared how frustrating it is to use the internet because of the challenges he has controlling his hand movements. It's easy to see lists like these and not think about the real people behind them."

Sarah Gallardo
Lead Email Developer,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

- ☐ **Support keyboard navigation.** Not all users use a mouse! So, ensure people can interact with your content using only a keyboard. This also includes forms, which often need more robust code work to be keyboard-friendly.
- ☐ **Create user-friendly forms.** Especially on mobile, completing forms can be time-consuming and frustrating, particularly if a person has physical challenges. Increase your form completion rate by defining field inputs and using matching keyboards, such as providing a number pad to input a phone number. Also, use auto-capitalize for names and places, auto-complete for mailing addresses and email domains, and auto-fill for information you already have.

> "When creating forms to capture customer information, be mindful that the most effective design is the one that supports ease of completion. Consider how much information you need at that very moment to accomplish your immediate goals. It's not only considerate and kind to not ask for everything all at once, but makes forms less overwhelming."

Scott Multer
Executive Creative Director,
Oracle Digital Experience Agency

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Creating accessible and inclusive brand experiences expand your audience and increase engagement.

We can help with that.

Oracle Digital Experience Agency has hundreds of the leading minds ready to help Oracle customers build stronger, longer-lasting relationships with every customer, employee, and partner they reach—even if they aren't using Oracle platforms to manage those experiences.

Wide Scope of Services

Creative & coding

Strategy & analytics

Campaign management & deployment

Consulting & advisement

Project management

Implementation & configuration

Broad Channel Support

Email

Web

SMS

Mobile push

Browser push

Direct mail

Plus, omnichannel orchestration of all of the above

Many Platforms Supported

Oracle Responsys

Oracle Eloqua

Oracle Unity

Oracle Infinity

Oracle Fusion CX

Oracle Fusion Sales

Oracle Fusion Service

Oracle HCM

Want help? Let's talk about how we can work together to seize your opportunities and overcome your challenges. Contact your Oracle account manager, visit us online, or reach out to us at OracleAgency_us@oracle.com.

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