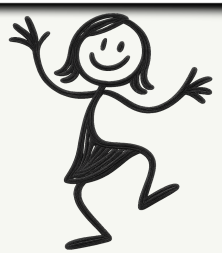
The (r)evolution of DesignOps: It's time to think (really) *BIG*

From Reactive Support to Strategic Transformation Leadership.



Embracing change.

DesignOps Summit
by Rosenfeld



Patrizia *Bertini*
11th September 2025

DesignOps Summit
by Rosenfeld

Nice to meet you!

PATRIZIA BERTINI

- R&D operations leader with 25+ years in leading enterprise-wide transformation programmes that delivered measurable business impact
- Expert in systems thinking and change management for scalable R&D operations.
- Advisor to European institutions on accessibility, data protection, and Innovation
- **Curious human being**



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Are we *optimising* ourselves into *irrelevance*?



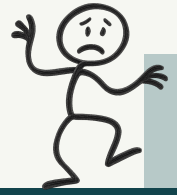


What if DesignOps isn't stagnating.

What if we're undermining it by mistaking *efficiency* for *leadership*.

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The Regulatory Reality:

Three EU Regulations, One Problem

GDPR (2018)
Scope: EU personal data processing
Penalties: Up to €20M or 4% global turnover

EAA (EU Accessibility Act, 2025)
Scope: Digital services for EU consumers
Penalties: Vary by member state

AI ACT (2026)
Scope: AI systems by risk category
Penalties: Up to €35M or 7% global turnover

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Europe's Rules Don't Stop at the Border

EU laws apply to every product in Europe.

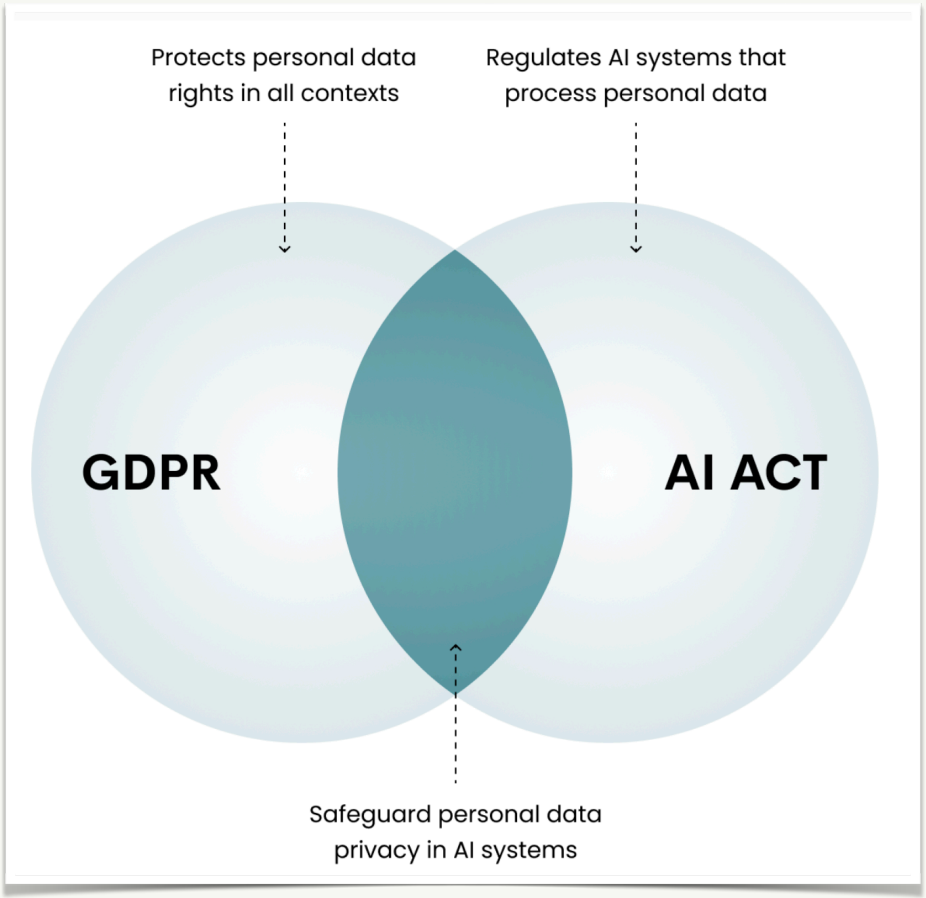
For digital products, use inside the EU triggers compliance - regardless of who the user is.

Regulations don't just add up: they overlap, collide, and multiply obligations.

GDPR, AI Act, Accessibility Act?

Just a few of more regulations.





The Accountability gap

Who is in *your* organisation actually responsible for these regulations,

or are you just hoping compliance *happens* by accident?

The reality check

Legal

Understands regulations but lacks implementation expertise

Leadership

Who nod along in meetings but never ask the hard questions



Product

Prioritises features over compliance

Design

Spots problems but cannot fix them

Engineering

Relegates compliance to the backlog

Compliance becomes everyone's concern and no one's responsibility.

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The strategic opportunity



There is a huge **void.**

(and an even bigger opportunity)

A million-dollar gap only DesignOps can fill, driving true enterprise transformation.

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From compliance to transformation.

(A 4 Acts story)

How DesignOps unlocked enterprise change turning rules into results.



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Act 1: Assessing the context

Q3-Q4 2023 - EAA deadline: 400 days to compliance

GOAL: Assess and raise awareness across different business units
(Legal, CSR, Compliance, Product, Development)



Status Quo

1 Accessibility SME

Average WCAG compliance > 30%

No Action

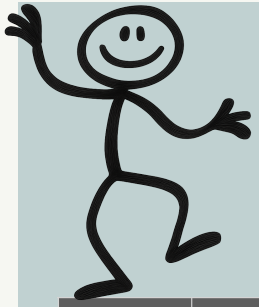
No accessibility conversations

Maturity

Maturity level: 1
Reactive compliance

Superpowers: Problem Setting, System Thinking

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Accessibility Maturity levels

Level	Stage	Characteristics	Business Impact
1	**Reactive Compliance**	Ad hoc **responses** to external pressure	High risk, minimal value
2	**Managed Process**	Basic processes with **dedicated** resources	Reduced risk, limited integration
3	**Integrated Practice**	Systematic workflows across teams	Operational efficiency gains
4	**Strategic Advantage**	Business value and **competitive differentiation**	Revenue growth, market leadership
5	**Innovation Leadership**	Industry leading innovation	Market dominance, premium positioning

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The programme goals

Moving beyond compliance to create genuine business value and market differentiation

PROTECT

Protect €24M annual public sector revenue through accessibility compliance.

PROFIT

Drive 15% market expansion and enhanced customer retention through accessible products.

PURPOSE

Build authentic advantage, lead deep digital transformation, and set industry standards

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Act 2: Build the business case

Q1 2024: Business case approved within 6 weeks



GOAL: Obtain buy-in from stakeholders
By demonstrating the business consequences of not being accessible

Assess Impact	**Define Plan**	**Budget**
Quantify business consequences	Create high-level action plan	Quantify effort and resources

"Accessibility isn't just compliance: it’s a business imperative that expands market reach and enhances brand reputation."

Superpowers: Storytelling, Problem Solving, Planning

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Next year we need an accessibility budget.

We have only one decision to make:

invest in accessibility or ***pay*** for non-compliance.



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Act 3: Building the programme

Q2-Q3 2024

GOAL: Set up the team and define product prioritisation



Build Team	**Run Audit**	**Analyse Users**	**Risk Assessment**
5 developers & 1 PM	On all products to define effort	Behaviours & expectations	Marketing, Analytics, Sales, Legal

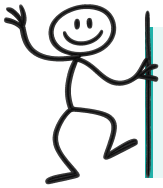
Build new Accessibility tools' ecosystem

Superpowers: Planning & Prioritisation (On steroids)

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Act 4: Executing excellence

Q3 2024 - Q2 2025



GOAL: Minimise risk exposure, remain competitive, support the organisation to become champions

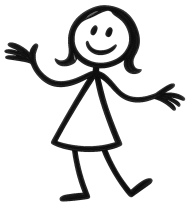
Retrofitting Plan Implementation strategy	**R&D process design** New ways of working	**Education** Trained 100+ across all BU
Accessibility & Risk Registry	**Accessibility Competence Centre**	**Cultural change**

Superpowers: Process Redesign, Change Management

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The results



200%
ROI (Conservative Calculation)

100%
Public Revenue Protected

65%
Testing Cost Reduction

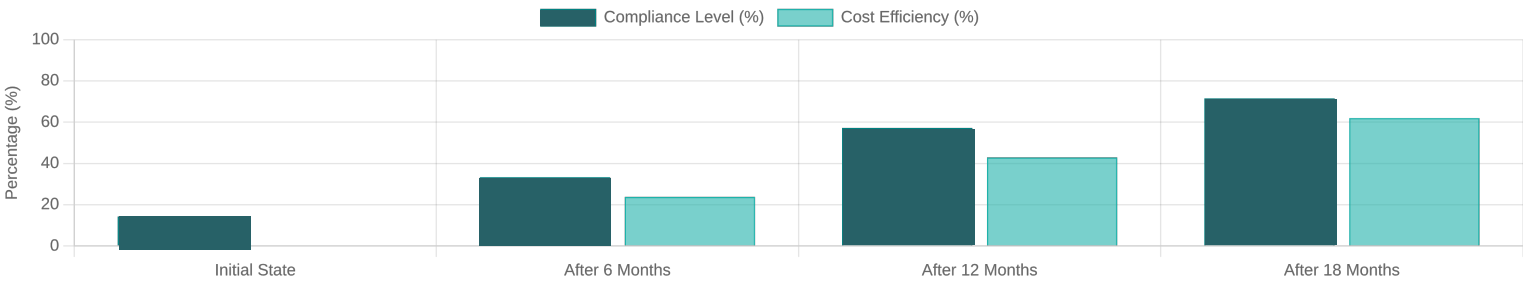
75%
Compliance in 14 Months

25%
Developers with Accessibility Certification

Significant Growth Potential Through Increased Retention

Programme Progress Over Time





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From reactive compliance to strategic advantage.

In less than 18 months.

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Speak stakeholders' language.
***Quantify* your impact.**



Master Strategic communication

ALIGNED CONSULTING

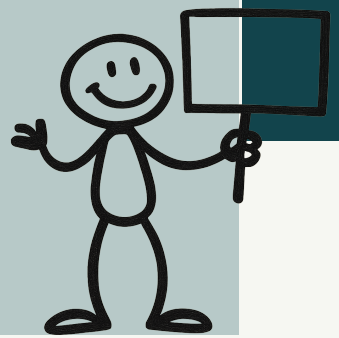


Storytelling **drives outcomes.**

Transformational leadership

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Own **your errors and embrace participative change management.**



Execution excellence

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The broader opportunity

This can be applied to any regulation affecting digital product orgs

Building digital products today means navigating rising legal demands.

Organisations need professionals fluent in both product development and compliance.



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The DesignOps Advantage

DesignOps leaders possess the unique combination of

systems thinking,
cross-functional fluency,
and user-centricity

required for
enterprise transformation.



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When was the last time you spoke to the CEO (or C-executive)?

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Regulatory transformation is inevitable

AI / data / accessibility governance creates unprecedented opportunities



DesignOps can lead.

Or be led.

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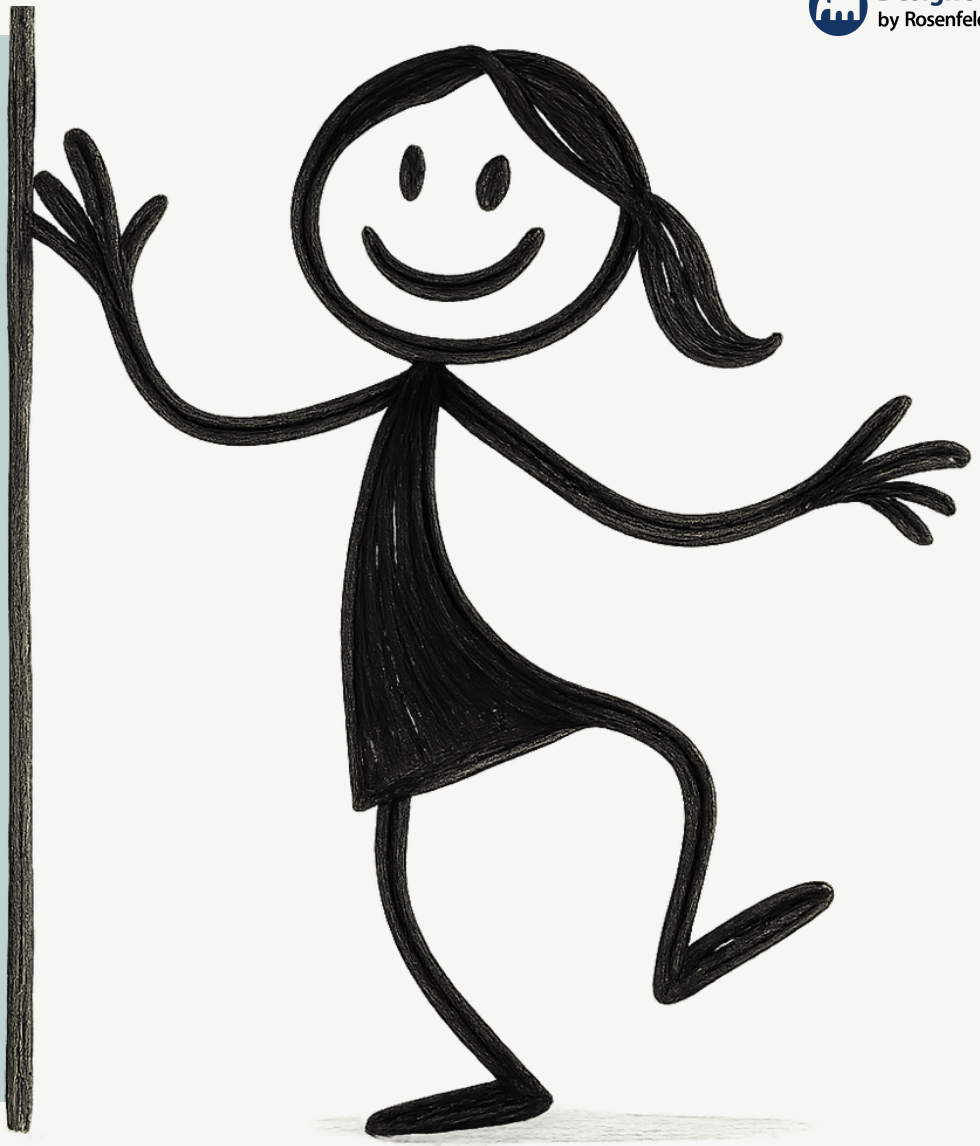
Questions?

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