

## Corporate Disability Sensitivity

Disability sensitivity at the corporate management level must be a different perspective than that of front-line staff. It must begin from the policy level and understanding that policies are not always carried out as intended. They can often result in unintended consequences. These circumstances can result in risk at the legal and marketing level.

Utilize your corporate influence and contractual clout to bring customer and provider corporations into these understandings.

It is hoped that the following will be viewed from these perspectives.

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### Marketing to People with Disabilities, their Families, and Friends

Let us begin where many corporate executives have begun over the past thirty years plus that have seen the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. That is to say with the legal advice they have gotten from their attorneys.

"It is cheaper and easier to fight accessibility in court than implement the changes necessary."

This advice has led so many into costly risk filled legal battles with damaging outcomes. Besides failing in court such battles have had disastrous brand impacts in the marketplace.

In our awakening world where the approach of companies to minority matters impact how they are viewed by consumers such attempts to avoid being accessible to people with disabilities at the customer and employee levels can reduce brand marketability and negatively impact the bottom line.

There are overriding factors for many. Namely that not to be accessible is wrong, self-defeating and simply immoral.

Conversely marketing to people with disabilities, their families, and friends can present significant growth opportunities for companies. It allows a company to stake out the moral high ground by doing right.

## The Marketing Case for Business, government and nonprofits

Whether we are talking about a business, a government agency or a nonprofit they all serve the customer and have employees. They also must include people with disabilities as customers and employees. They are all part of their customer base in the 2020 post pandemic way of looking at how people interact with businesses, governments and nonprofits.

People with disabilities (PWD) are a Market the Size of China Representing a population of 1.1 billion, PWD's are an emerging market the size of China. Their Friends and

Family adds another 1.9 billion potential consumers that act on their emotional connection to PWD. Together, they control over \$9 trillion in annual disposable income globally. Companies and governments seeking new ways to create value for stakeholders must begin acting to attract this newly unleashed cohort.

### Opportunity from Demographic Shifts

Since 1972, G10 economies have implemented laws that have created a legal platform for PWD to become equal members in the economy and society. The most successful of these laws are in education. The initial beneficiaries of these laws are now entering the workforce, controlling \$2.7 trillion in the United States alone.

The demographics of an aging population has created a 'bulge' of the wealthiest generation in human history. As Boomers' physical realities change, their need and desire to remain active in society dovetails with the demands of PWD.

The result is three generations of skilled consumers who have similar needs, evolved identities and significant spending power. Sectors likely to benefit from these changes are consumer products, retail, financial services, health care and the public sector.

### Measure Action to Create Value

Big is not enough. Very little research exists in the marketplace around how these consumers act relative to their disabilities. Existing research focuses on medical condition, rather than personal identity and common aspects that trigger buying behavior. Our primary research shows that 25% of companies in the S&P 500 have any publicly observable activity relative to PWD. Of these 500 firms, 6% are acting in a way that creates material shareholder value. There is an open door for value seeking entities to reap the rewards of first mover advantage - connect with a material new market requiring low levels of additional investment. Firms must act today to seize this rare opportunity.

This snapshot of the disability market is compiled from several sources, many of which have been analyzing the disability community for decades. This overview of the data illustrates marketing trends and key insights about the buying and influence power of people with disabilities (PWDs). With all the information available today and with the right marketing tactics the business case for smart businesses, government agencies and nonprofits are clear.

It should be noted that there is no data available from the 2020 census because the Trump administration deleted all questions related to disability in the questionnaire.

Over one in five Americans, approximately 66 million, people have a disability making it the largest minority group in the nation.

30% of the nation's 69.6 million families have at least one member with a disability. Between 1990 and 2020, there was a 25% increase in the number of Americans with disabilities.

50% of Americans 65 years and older have a disability.

25% of all customers have a disability, or a close friend or relative who has a disability.

61% of people with disabilities are of working age, between 16 and 64 years old.

8.3% of US children and teenagers - 6.2 million, have a physical or mental disability. This reflects a sharp growth in the population of young Americans with disabilities over the past 3 decades.

People with disabilities are coalescing as an economic and social power. In 1994, for the first time, a majority of people with disabilities said they felt a strong sense of identity with other people with disabilities. Since then, the power of the disability community has continued to grow and influence business, civic and social service interactions.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau,

The National Organization on Disability/Harris Interactive - Survey of Americans with Disabilities,

"People with Disabilities Have \$220 to \$260 Billion in Discretionary Spending Power"

Source: Diversity, Inc

Projected numbers by Access Ready Inc.

## Key Consumer Traits of People with Disabilities

Assistive or accessible information Technology plays a critical role in the lives of people with disabilities. Without assistive or accessible information technology, 77% of PWDs would be unable to: "take care of themselves, hold meaningful employment or leave their home to attend social gatherings."

72% of PWDs are likely to upgrade a product to the latest model.

62% of PWDs say they are likely to do business with companies that accommodate diversity and equal treatment of employees.

Urban areas of the U.S. have a higher concentration of people with disabilities -The top five cities where people with disabilities live (in descending order)

- (1) Detroit, Michigan,
- (2) Baltimore, Maryland,
- (3) Miami, Florida,
- (4) Newark, New Jersey and
- (5) Buffalo, New York.

The disability community is comprised of individual groups, each with unique health care and quality of life challenges.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau,

The National Organization on Disability/Harris Interactive Survey of Americans with Disabilities. It is no longer possible or prudent for the business, government or nonprofit sectors to ignore disability issues or opportunities in today's marketplace.

Three-quarters (73%) of people with disabilities are heads of household.

77% have no children in the household (boosting their discretionary income and free time for travel and leisure activities.)

Individuals with disabilities exhibit strong brand loyalty toward products affiliated with disability-related causes. In order to tap into this brand loyalty, there must be a logical relationship between the company, its values, customer, community, employee and the cause.

Sources: Findings and Recommendations of the National Task Force on Technology and Disability,

Simmons Market Research Bureau

### Home Life for People with Disabilities

Nearly half (48%) of all people with disabilities are the principal shoppers in their household.

46% of people with disabilities are married.

58% own their own homes.

9.4% of the 1.6 million full-time freshmen enrolled at 3,100 institutions of higher education in the United States reported living with some kind of disability

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau,

### Entertainment /Travel Habits of People with Disabilities

\$13.6 billion spent on 31.7 million trips each year by people with disabilities.

\$3.3 billion spent by travelers with disabilities each year in the airline industry.

\$4.2 billion spent by travelers with disabilities each year in the lodging industry.

\$27 billion per year could be spent by people with disabilities if certain needs were met.

12% increase in revenues in the hotel and hospitality industry, attributed, in part, to consumers with disabilities.

Four out of ten members of the traveling public are made up of Americans with disabilities and their companions.

Sources: Travel Industry Association of America/Harris Interactive/Open Doors/Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality Survey.

The National Organization on Disability/Harris Interactive - Survey of Americans with Disabilities.

### Projected Growth of Disability Segment

In the next 10 years, the number of Americans over 50 will increase by 40%.

Between 2000 and 2030, the numbers of Americans over age 65 will more than double, from 34.8 million to more than 70.3 million.

Americans 50 and older represent 25% of the population, but control 50% of the nation's buying power and 75% of its assets, representing \$150 billion in annual discretionary income, and billions more for necessities like housing and food.

About 30% of all Americans become disabled prior to retirement age.

More than 7 out of every 10 Americans will acquire some sort of disability by the time they reach the age of 75.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau,

Patricia Dig: America's Largest Untapped Market; Fortune Magazine,

U.S. Social Security Administration:

The influence that the accessibility of information technology is having on how these statistics are playing out cannot be underestimated. The need for accessible information technologies is clear. While the demand comes from people with disabilities the purchasing power behind this need comes from the business, government and nonprofit sectors that must provide access to their customers and employees.

The primary factor related to accessibility is that in most cases the technologies necessary to develop and make both software and hardware products accessible are readily available.

Things like accessible touch screens are no longer the stuff of science fiction.

Bringing understanding to the development of information technology goods and services is a realistic approach.