

Marketing Tips For Engaging People With Disabilities

- Think about people with disabilities as you would any diverse, minority constituency you're interested in engaging within your marketing strategies.
- Think of disability and accessibility under marketing, community services, audience engagement - not only legal requirements, laws, compliance, etc.
- Look to establish relationships and alliances with disability groups.
- Try to find programming that would be of interest to a specific disability community and target as a way to introduce them to your institution. Hire disabled actors.
- Work with docents/ushers/volunteers with disabilities as a way to engage your audiences.
- Think of the experiences of PwD from the moment a decision is made to want to attend to days, months and years after the event. So think of additional barriers – communication, cost, transportation, etc.
- Always think of people with disabilities in conjunction with the services you're offering. The services should be an extension of the audiences you want to serve.
- Remember, disability is not fixed or static. Disability is personal and therefore the accommodations for people are individual and 'dependent' on individual needs.
- NEVER say NO to a request or question, never say we can't, we won't, we don't. SAY we'll see, we'll investigate, we'll try. ASK "what can we do, what do you need to make your experience at our venue successful".
- Have an access point person – someone people can reach out to who knows the answers. Have this contact information on all marketing info/websites and make it easy to find. This is someone members of the community can trust.
- Engage the community - research and find the disability groups/organizations in your area and engage them to reach out to their constituencies. Attend disability specific events, meetings. Introduce yourself and your programs to the community. Invite them in. Offer incentives.
- Do Staff training to all levels of staff from the top (board, executive staff) to management (marketing, development) to those in direct contact with audiences (security, box office, volunteers). Training should include how to work with/talk to/relate to PwD. All trainings are best when led by a PwD.

Marketing Tips For Engaging People With Disabilities Continued

- Look at barriers to your organization outside the box and beyond ramps and programs. Think of barriers from the perspective of PwD – fear of the unknown, hard to find information, transportation issues, economic factors, someone to go with, attitudes of staff?
- Get PwD on your advisory boards and let the community know. Have them function as ambassadors – they will serve as links to the communities you want to invite.
- Plan your accessibility long range – you can't be all things to all people. People with disabilities are accommodating. Ask people what they would need and want and then see what you can do.