



The Voice of Your Customer

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Addressing the Needs of Persons with Disabilities – A Strong Business Case!

By Crystal L. Kendrick

Disabilities occur across all spectrums of society. According to published reports from the INclusion Network, a non-profit organization working to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities, 25% of Americans have a long-term or temporary disability, limiting a major mental or physical life function. Persons with disabilities are the largest minority group in America with an ever evolving number of persons with temporary ailments who must also make lifestyle adjustments to accommodate their physical or mental limitations.

With an aggregate income of over \$1 trillion and the discretionary spending power of approximately \$220 million, it is truly a wise investment to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities to do business with your company. In addition to their role in the consumer buying process, many persons with disabilities are gainfully employed, placing a much greater emphasis on creating an ease of doing business in the corporate procurement process.

"It is just good common sense to plan inclusive practices into all elements of operating any organization. An organization does not intentionally limit access or usability of their facilities, products, packaging and services. In most cases the "curb-cut effect" is not considered during the planning stage. What I mean is-- Even though curb-cuts were originally intended for folks in wheelchairs, everyone has the common sense to use them." says Ken Gunkel, Director of Advancement- INclusion Network.

Like most niche markets, persons with disabilities rely on routine and are extremely brand loyal to businesses that cater to their needs. Here are a few ideas that can help your business to become the preferred vendor of persons with disabilities:

- 1) Design facilities that are very accommodating to persons with physical limitations
- 2) Provide information in multiple formats including large print and Braille
- 3) Offer assistive listening devices and/or sign language interpreters
- 4) Establish a TDD telephone line
- 5) Create websites that require extensive graphics, designs and special features to obtain required information
- 6) Train associates to effectively communicate and interact with the disabled community
- 7) Be mindful of product placement and protective packaging strategies
- 8) Select locations with proximity to affordable and accessible transportation
- 9) Promote a welcoming environment in your marketing material

For more information about the needs of persons with disabilities, feel free to visit www.inclusion.org.

Crystal L. Kendrick is the President of The Voice of Your Customer, a marketing consulting firm that assists organizations to create exceptional customer experiences. For more information, call (513) 281-3228 or visit www.thevoiceofyourcustomer.com.



Do you offer EXCEPTIONAL customer experiences...or simply good products and services?