

Industry Snapshot

Institute of Professional Development

Disability Positive:

Marketing practices post pandemic at a complex community sector organisation.

Summary

Disability Positive is a large community sector organisation, with an annual income of >£1M. It provides “services, opportunities, and a voice to over 10,000 people with lived experience of disability and long-term conditions, and their families”, via a combination of public sector contracts, income generation, grants, and fundraising. Disability Positive has 75% of its workforce: (c.120 paid staff and volunteers) that has lived experience of disability and long-term conditions.

This industry snapshot of Disability Positive explores existing marketing strategies, the marketing mix; and how digital and societal marketing differ from and could be applied to the wider community sector.

Following a brand audit in 2019, subsequent rebrand, and refection of key marketing frameworks Disability Positive has increased its marketing capacity; revisited its marketing strategy; aligned the marketing and communication approach for new market/service expansion; and considered traditional and digital forms of marketing, to ensure continued achievement of the ambitions within its 2020-2030 strategy to increase its reach and turnover.



The Key Marketing Literature Influencing Disability Positive

Marketing and management theory in a community sector organisation focuses on the organisation's social and environmental impact: achieving positive social change over and above commercial profit.

Disability Positive found the use of SOSTAC: the strategic marketing framework useful for the community sector where an organisation needs to understand their brand; evaluate their competition; know their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; as well as political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors that may influence the weighting of marketing activities in these types of organisations.

Furthermore, they found traditional frameworks such as SWOT, PESTLE analysis and the extended marketing mix (8 P's) were relevant to organisations delivering services. For the community sector the knowledge and skills of the workforce, what is used to promote the service, how the customer accesses the service and the charitable ethos, are all important considerations.

The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) growth share and Ansoff matrix's were useful tools to use but there were limitations within the community sector, as these models may not be as relevant for community sector organisations.

Furthermore, a blend of traditional and digital marketing techniques is essential to promote services, thus meeting an organisation's objectives, driving customer value, loyalty and satisfaction.

What Disability Positive Did

The revisited marketing strategy had the aim to increase membership of the organisation, diversify income via charged-for services and social investment opportunities to enable Disability Positive to reach new customers; and build partnerships with organisations who had a shared vision.

Key objectives:

- To achieve an annual turnover of £5 million by year end 2030.
- To reach 20,000 million customers who use Disability Positive services by 2030.

Disability Positive aligned its marketing and communication approach for new market/service expansion: by reviewing its Marketing Strategy to include useful frameworks such as the 8 Ps, SWOT and PESTLE analysis to assess the factors that impact delivery. It also considered traditional and digital forms of marketing: ensuring their tone and images reflected their brand guidelines; ensuring the website and leaflets were clear on the service audience.

To meet strategic objectives, the CEO met with the Head of Business Development and Operations regularly, to identify any changes required to the marketing plan. Disability Positive's SWOT analysis highlighted the limited in-house marketing expertise, and low membership of the organisation in comparison to the number of disabled people supported. However, it also demonstrated some key strengths that could be used to the organisation's advantage, such as the new brand is aligned with company values, enabling Disability Positive to embrace the lived experience of the workforce to better market the services.

Disability Positive's PESTEL analysis highlighted the implications of UK changes to EU legislation that could impact services including VAT, the Human Rights Act and the increased focus on societal targets with funders. This model also enabled Disability Positive to develop a clear Social Value policy and action plan and increase the marketing of its societal and environmental impact to further diversify income.

The marketing mix was incredibly helpful to accurately prioritise Disability Positive's marketing tactics and activities: understanding of the organisation's product, target market, price, the people in the organisation and key marketing tools such as the website.

The BCG and Ansoff matrix identified opportunities for profitable growth such as existing charged for services that could be marketed to new customers in other geographical areas, and new activities such as growth of support for businesses, fundraising and corporate sponsorship. The diversification opportunities enabled Disability Positive to implement a revised marketing plan to help achievement of the ambitious growth within their 2020-2030 strategy.

"The lived experience of 75% of our workforce sets us apart and shapes everything we do—from strategy to service delivery."

Key Results

By year end 2024 Disability Positive achieved the following results:

- 17% increase in the number of people supported.
- 35% increase in income.
- 39% increase in social value (using the National Themes Outcomes and Measures framework).
- 45% reduction in carbon emissions (using 360o Carbon).

Impact

The application of the revised strategic marketing plan in the workplace has helped to clarify the vision, purpose, and values of Disability Positive. It has improved the use of digital and traditional marketing methods to increase customer numbers and engagement; and improved the impact on the wider disability community to achieve positive change.

Future Direction

Sign up new members - Disability Positive's unique selling point is working in coproduction with their disabled customers and representing them having a workforce with lived experience. However, there is still a large discrepancy between the number of disabled people supported and those who decide to sign up as members of the organisation. Therefore, the organisation needs to adapt the benefits of being a member and the marketing of this, so that it can increase the number of members of the organisation.

Diversification of Income - Disability Positive has a continued commitment to further diversify its income to meet increasing customer demands and environmental influences.

Concentration on key revenue streams and diversification of funding streams - Especially concentrating on marketing services, support for businesses. Disability Positive also has a separate fundraising strategy to further grow income/reach through fundraising and corporate sponsorship.

Social marketing in increasingly important in the community sector - Disability Positive has a continued commitment to societal marketing; highlighting the organisation's social and environmental impact.

Key Takeaways

Periodically re-visit marketing strategy/plan - Disability Positive's marketing strategy and plan needs to be continually updated, to reflect on the needs of a complex charitable organisation and growth potential.

Investment into resource - Disability Positive has increased its marketing budget; and invested in the team - from employment of a Policy and Communications Manager; to now also include a Head of Business Development and Operations, Business Development Manager; Communications Officer and Policy Research and Training Officer.

Marketing tools/techniques and frameworks are useful but not perfect - most common marketing tools, techniques, and blend of traditional and digital marketing can be equally effective, across both the community and commercial sector. However, it is evident that the experience at Disability Positive may differ from other community sector organisations, as not all the services are non-profit, so will need different marketing approaches for customer-beneficiaries, and customer-funders, or partners, to recognise the digital exclusion faced by these customers and ensure achievement of customer value and satisfaction.

Developing and maintaining relationships are paramount - the management of funder relationships is imperative where there are both beneficiary-customers and funder-customers, to achieve customer value and positive social change.

