



Breaking Barriers: Unleashing the Power of Inclusive Events

with Cazoshay Marie, Divine Intervention
Design



Introduction of Speaker: Cazoshay Marie



- Originally from Anchorage, Alaska
- Became a disability advocate and speaker after traumatic accident in May of 2017
- Possesses over a decade of expertise as a wellness professional, blogger, and keynoter
- Traumatic Brain Injury Ambassador for the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center
- Member of the Advisory Council for the Brain Injury Association of America
- Single mom and content creator currently residing in Arizona

Introduction

“Simply put, disability inclusion can be identified as the practice of creating environments, policies, and procedures that value and respect the needs of individuals living with disabilities.”

("Making Your Event Truly Accessible to All," n.d.)



Introduction

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) § 36.203(a) states that “A public accommodation shall afford goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations to an individual with a disability in the most **integrated** setting appropriate to the needs of the individual.”

This is helpful for you



Your Goal as Event Professionals Desiring to Provide More Inclusive Events...

- **is to allow those with disabilities to connect, participate, engage in and benefit from the events you are creating**
- **which results in encouraging those with disabilities to become repeat customers or attendees who will then encourage others to also become clients**

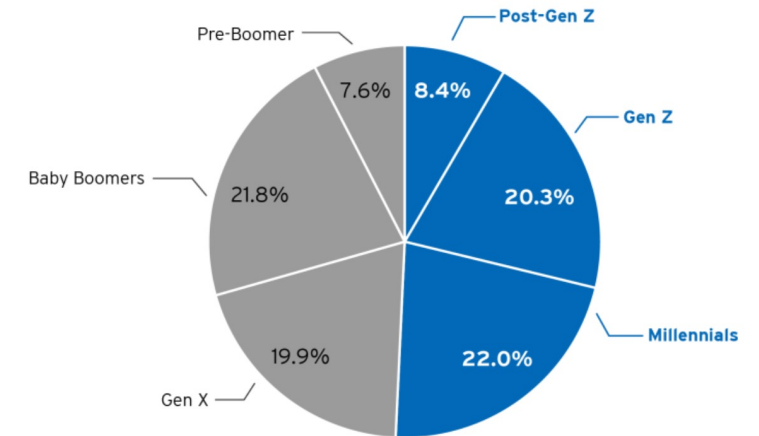
Why Should You Care?

This is Why:

- Legal Responsibility-ADA
- A more robust and inclusive DEI approach
- Inclusivity is no longer an “ask”, it is now an expectation
 - It’s the standard, not the exception
- Greater participation and engagement
 - Universal Design
- Enhances access and safety
- Negative consequences to not considering accessibility
- The right thing to do-we’ll all be there eventually
- Important to the younger generations
 - Millennials are now the largest portion of the population
 - 72.24 million in the U.S. in 2022
 - More than half the total population is comprised of Millennials or younger

FIGURE 2

Share of US population by generation



Numbers pertain to July 1, 2019

Note: Birth years are as follows: Post Gen Z (2013+), Gen Z (1997-2012), Millennials (1981-1996), Gen X (1965-1980), Boomers (1946-1964), Pre-Boomer (1945 and earlier).

Source: William H. Frey analysis of Census Bureau population estimates released June 25, 2020.

B Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

Business advantages and positive social impact of inclusive events

Advantages Include:

- A largely untapped market
- Allows you to be a better event planner because it challenges you
 - allows for more creativity in your events
- As a newer consideration, you have the opportunity to set yourselves apart as event professionals in the industry
- Positive impact on brand reputation
- If it doesn't make dollars, then it doesn't make sense



Understanding the Diverse Needs of Attendees with Disabilities

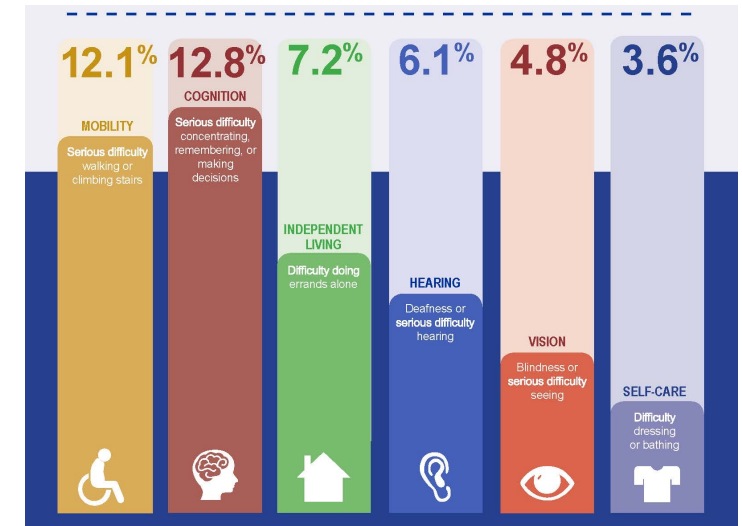
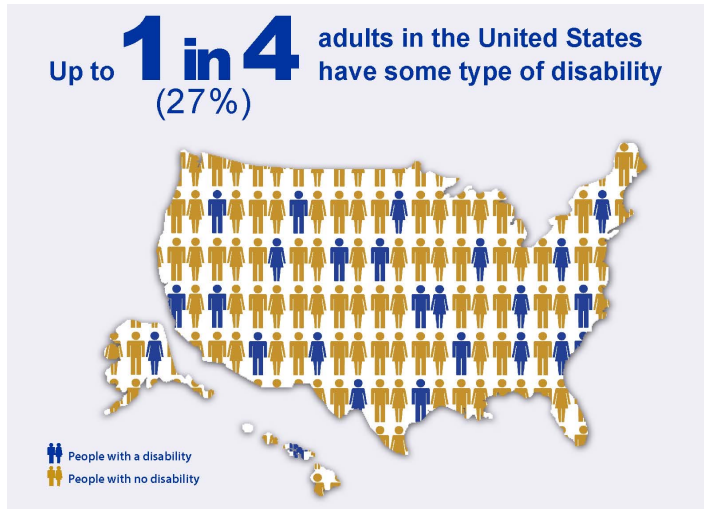
“It’s common knowledge that those living with disabilities routinely face barriers to participation on a daily basis, because the rest of us fail to recognize that the environments we create do not meet their needs and realities: inaccessible physical environments, communication barriers, and attitudinal barriers being just a few examples that contribute to limiting their ability to fully engage in our events and activities.”

("Making Your Event Truly Accessible to All," n.d.)



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Understanding the Diverse Needs of Attendees with Disabilities



CDC.org

The statistics get a lot more specific-can be helpful for you in further defining how much of your specific target market is disabled (age, region, etc.)

Understanding the Diverse Needs of Attendees with Disabilities

Things to Consider:

- How well do you know your audience?
- Managing probabilities by anticipating needs
- Start by taking an inventory of your own event planning methods and practices
- Not as difficult and demanding it may seem
 - many of the accommodations for one disability are helpful for others as well
 - individuals may have conditions they don't consider to be disabilities, but they could also benefit from accommodation considerations



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Communication and Promotion of Accessibility Features

Pre-Event Planning:

- Provide clear and accessible communication and marketing materials
- Creating a registration process that accommodates individuals with disabilities
 - Do you require captions?
 - Do you require a sign language interpreter?
 - Will you be accompanied by a service animal or Personal Care Assistant (PCA)?
 - Do you need wheelchair access?
- ★ Always include a write-in option, because your attendees may have needs you did not anticipate



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Venue Selection & Accessibility Audits

Some Considerations:

- Building entrance, the meeting rooms, the presentation stage, the bathrooms, etc.
 - Consider room configurations
- Elevators or access ramps should be available
- Invisible Disabilities: chronic pain, autoimmune disorders, cognitive conditions, and Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS). (Social Tables, n.d.)
- ★ Offer materials and information ahead of time so participants can review and prepare
- Provide details about the nearest accessible public transportation options
- Let attendees know which entrances are best for wheelchair access
- ★ Allow attendees to make requests for reasonable accommodations
- Have rooms clearly marked (provide signage with directions)
- Easy to manage schedules (consider flow and provide ample time for getting from place to place)

Staff Training & Awareness of Disability Etiquette

- Also an important part of the auditing and assessment of your event planning process-
 - this includes who you hire
- The words you choose matter
 - Be mindful of your approach
 - Don't infantilize individuals or make them feel like they are a bother-it's already difficult to ask for help
 - Everyone wants to be treated with respect, dignity and consideration
- Be mindful of body language



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Your Goal as Event Professionals

Can't possibly foresee every disability or accommodation that needs to be made, one of your primary objectives is to create an environment where attendees feel comfortable expressing their needs. You then must be able to think creatively to problem-solve solutions.



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Accommodations for Various Disabilities

Mobility

- Accessible parking near venue
- proximity to bus stop
- ramp and elevator access
- accessible bathrooms
- barrier-free pathways
- wide doorways and aisles to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters
- no loose cables across walking areas
- Reserved seating



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Accommodations for Various Disabilities

Vision

The American Optometric Association defines low vision as two categories: low sighted and legally blind

Loss of central vision

Loss of peripheral (side) vision

Night blindness

Hazy vision

- Have you reserved a section at the front of the audience seating for people who are blind or have a visual impairment?
- If slides or overheads are to be used, will they be made available in an alternative format for people who are blind or have a visual impairment?
- Barrier-free pathways
- No loose cables in walkways

Accommodations for Various Disabilities

Hearing

- Sign Language Interpreter
- Be sure to give the deaf participants any printed materials before the start of the presentation.
 - It is difficult to watch the interpreter and read through distributed documents at the same time.
- Other assistive equipment or technology
 - Closed Captioning

Cognitive

Visitors with cognitive disabilities may face difficulty understanding or interpreting information and sensory stimuli.

- To make your content and design accessible for them, you should keep text-based language (e.g., signage, flyers, and agendas) simple and provide visual cues and sensory-friendly spaces.

Accommodations for Various Disabilities

Neurodivergence

Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurodivergent conditions impact a person's ability to engage with traditional event design, such as crowded, noisy venues or interactive networking.

- provide sensory-friendly environments
- quiet areas of respite when needed
 - A quiet room doesn't necessarily equal a non-stimulating room
- prior notice of changes to schedules or routines.

Mental Health Conditions

Mental health conditions like depression, PTSD, and anxiety can impact a person's emotional or psychological state.

- offer accessible mental health resources
- allow emotional support animals
- provide advanced notice of schedules and information

Keep in Mind...



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Engaging Disability-Focused Organizations and Community Groups (Resources)

Resources to Consider:

- Find your local disability organizations and attend their trainings
 - Many are available online
- Find events from local and national organizations that you can attend on your own time to learn more about disabilities
- Kulture City
 - Philadelphia is the first certified sensory-inclusive city
- Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center
 - Spinal cord injuries, TBI and burns
- Social media
 - #disabilityinclusion, #disabilityawareness, #disabilityadvocate
- Collaborate with disability consultants and experts
 - If not located in your area, may be able to meet online
- Cultivate relationships with your resources

Measuring Success (Evaluation & Feedback)

After Your Event:

- Collect feedback from attendees with disabilities
- Assess the impact and effectiveness of accessibility measures
- Focus on continual improvement and learning from each event
- Congratulate yourself for your efforts & celebrate your successes!



Conclusion

By prioritizing disability inclusion in event planning, we not only fulfill ethical and legal responsibilities but also open up new opportunities for growth, innovation, and a more vibrant event landscape.



Thank you for being here!



Where to Contact Me



Website: www.DIDwithCazoshay.com or
https://bio.site/cazoshay_marie

Instagram, TikTok: @cazoshay_marie

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/DIDwithCazoshay>

Email:

cazoshay@divineinterventiondesign.com

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