

THE SOURCE BOOK OF MULTICULTURAL EXPERTS 2009/10

# The Disability Market

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# **Puzzled About Finding the Disability Market of \$220 Billion?**



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**Tari Hartman Squire's**



**EIN SOF Communications, Inc.  
310-473-5954**

**Tari@EINSOFcommunications.com  
www.EINSOFcommunications.com**

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**Disability-Inclusive Diversity Results Since 1987**



## Disability as Diversity...Connecting the Puzzle Pieces Together

**Tari Hartman Squire**  
CEO, EIN SOF Communications, Inc.

Successful marketing “with” the disabilities market of 54 million Americans (20% of population) is puzzling. It comprises over \$1 trillion in aggregate income and \$220 billion in purchasing power. That’s more than the coveted \$189.7 billion teen market and doesn’t include

**At least 54 million Americans have a disability (20% of the population).**

brand-loyal family, friends and colleagues.

### **Building Blocks for Building the Business Case:**

A University of Massachusetts, Boston survey reported participants responded positively towards socially responsible companies; 92% felt more favorable toward companies hiring individuals with disabilities; 87% prefer to give business to such companies.

Open Doors Organization reports adults with disabilities spend \$13.6 billion annually on travel. The General Accounting Office discovered 12% revenue increase in hospitality, by implementing access provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Nielsen NRGi/EIN SOF “Disability Community Market Research Initiative” focus groups with national disability organizations revealed this tight-knit segment expects companies to walk-the-walk/roll-the-roll

(people with disabilities in advertising, accessible products/services, increased employees with disabilities).

Disability is the only 24/7 “open enrollment” diversity club—anyone can join...anytime, anyplace. Baby Boomers acquiring age-related disabilities and functional limitations greatly expands this market.

Tips to fit puzzle pieces together with this complex and highly nuanced segment:

- Contrary to media images and majority culture, the disabilities market is vibrant and full of potential—if approached correctly.

- Inventory accessible products/services, marketing, employment, and Corporate Social Responsibility/philanthropic assets. Weave accessible welcome mats for customer and employees with disabilities.

### **Preliminary Checklist:**

Products/services accessible and usable to people with disabilities?

Braille and picture menus?

Mobile devices accessible?

Are Universal Design principles employed (restrooms, dressing rooms, counter heights, lever-door handles, automatic-doors, paths of travel, point-of-purchase machines)?

Websites accessible to screen reader technology?

Does advertising employ talent with

disabilities? Are TV spots captioned?

Customer advisory group on disability and aging to provide key insights to marketing, CorpComm, PR, HR, diversity, Corporate Social Responsibility? If not, why not?

Do marketing/advertising messages use disability-savvy images and language? Not sure? Review AP Stylebook, page 74 at [www.apstylebook.com](http://www.apstylebook.com).

**Employment, Employment, Employment:**

Do you actively recruit interns and college graduates with disabilities? Are jobs posted on Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities' (COSD) Career Gateway™? Do you build strategic alliances with key disability-related organizations such as the World Institute on Disability, and initiatives like National Disability Institute's Real Economic Impact Tour? Do you have a disability-related Employee Resource Groups (ERG) -- such as AT&T's IDEAL or PepsiCo's EnAble? Do career advancement strategies include UCLA Anderson School of Management's Leadership Institute for Managers with Disabilities?

**Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together:**

Each year, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy designates October as "National Disability Employment Awareness

Month." Because it mirrors Hispanic Heritage Month, African American History Month, Asian Awareness Month, it's a great opportunity to raise awareness internally, and build strategic alliances externally. Think about a company-wide disability awareness event, hosted by your ERG and invite a celebrity with a disability like Robert David Hall of CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, or disability leaders.

The disabilities market is exploding with millions of Baby Boomers acquiring age-related disabilities and functional limitations. Smart marketers track technology trends of early adopters with disabilities (vibrating pagers, text messaging, talking mobile devices, and voice recognition software). People with disabilities are very creative, moving through life in non-conventional ways. Mainstream technology and lifestyle innovations started as disability-related tools to increase productivity.

**Disability as Diversity: Connecting the Puzzle Pieces:**

For 20 years, EIN SOF is the leading strategic marketing, PR, market research and accessible event production company specializing in disability, diversity and public policy. Let us help you connect disabilities market puzzle pieces to build brand loyalty, fortify your workforce and raise your bottom line.

Tari Hartman Squire  
CEO

**Contact information:**

EIN SOF Communications, Inc.  
11601 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 500  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
Ph. 310-473-5954 or 310-650-0595  
[Tari@EINSOFcommunications.com](mailto:Tari@EINSOFcommunications.com)  
[www.EINSOFcommunications.com](http://www.EINSOFcommunications.com)