

2017 PRSA Pittsburgh Renaissance Awards

Social Media Campaign: #IWantToWork

Submitted by Blender, Inc.

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What started as one selfie turned into life-changing legislation

Situation Analysis/Research

When young adults with disabilities in Pennsylvania turn 21, they're forced to leave behind the supportive services system they've known all their lives. Facing great challenges in this broken system, they frequently 'graduate to the couch' or are left with menial, unfulfilling jobs.

The Campaign for What Works and 21 and Able, supported by United Way, partnered to help create awareness of this issue and encourage support for legislation that would develop connections between education agencies and private employers to successfully help high school graduates with disabilities transition to the workforce. The Blender team developed a multi-phase social media advocacy campaign, #IWantToWork, to build support for this important legislation. This campaign gives young adults with disabilities a platform to personally express their desire to work and share their career goals and aspirations. It started with a visual 'selfie' campaign.

The #IWantToWork campaign aims to educate legislators, members of the community and businesses throughout Pennsylvania about the importance of equal opportunity employment for people with disabilities. The campaign advocates for legislation to increase funding for employment transition services for young adults with disabilities.

Our key target audience was legislators. Our goal was to create a platform for young adults with disabilities to inspire Pennsylvania state legislators to pass a critical employment law.

Planning

Blender helped to form the #IWantToWork campaign coalition, a group of like-minded organizations, positioned in key areas across the state, who came together on weekly conference calls to strategize, outline goals, create a groundswell of support and mobilize self-advocates to conduct meetings with legislators in their districts.

Goals:

- Build a social community around the issue
- Increase awareness and support for equal opportunity employment for people with disabilities
- The passage of PA House Bill 400

Strategies:

- Plan and launch a phased approach
 - Phase 1 – Build a coalition and introduce the campaign
 - Phase 2 – Begin advocacy
 - Phase 3 – Build support
 - Phase 4 – Move toward legislation
 - Phase 5 – Keep up the momentum
- Research
 - Legislators and social media
 - According to the Congressional Management Foundation. 75% of senior staff said between one and 30 comments on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were enough to grab their attention on an issue. Thirty-five percent said fewer than 10 comments were enough.

Implementation/Execution

By launching and building the campaign on social media, Blender was able to overcome the physical and geographical barriers that could lead to disenfranchisement among self-advocates with disabilities, and was able to cultivate relationships with state legislators. Fueled by the power of a supportive community, advocates were empowered to challenge the stereotypes of what gainful employment looks like for people with disabilities, and were well-positioned to personally advocate for this legislation.

- Phase 1 – Build a coalition: Introduce #IWantToWork
 - Build and grow a coalition of like-minded individuals and organizations across Pennsylvania
 - Create social channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) and launch website (IWantToWorkPA.org) with a consistent look and messaging
 - Create #IWantToWork selfie cards and encourage self-advocates to share their selfies, using #IWantToWork, and add a personal message expressing their desire to work.

- Phase 2 – Advocacy in action: “Take a selfie with me”
 - #IWantToWork Week
 - During October (National Disability Employment Awareness Month), the campaign scheduled meetings with key legislators across the state.
 - The ask to the legislators was simple – spend a few minutes of their time getting to know the self-advocate, take a selfie together, and learn about the campaign.
 - The selfies, shared with ‘#IWantToWork,’ were posted with a thank you message and the legislators were tagged.
 - As news of the campaign spread, more meetings occurred, more selfies were shared, and legislators began reaching out to ask when a self-advocate would be visiting them to take a selfie.
 - Powered by self-advocates and selfies, social media was the heart of the campaign, the medium that connected all the pieces and people together.
 - #IWantToWork week resulted in dozens of meetings with legislators, selfies and new co-sponsors for House Bill 400.
 - Meetings continued through the year until House Bill 400 was passed in May 2016.

- Phase 3 – Build support: Make it personal
 - The #IWantToWork blog was developed to give self-advocates a place to share their stories in their own words. Monthly topics and themes include personal testimonials, campaign updates, interviews with legislators and employer features.
 - Integration of Facebook Live
 - Thousands tune in to view Facebook Live videos which support the continued education and engagement of the campaign’s social audience.
 - #IWantToChat Facebook Live series
 - In monthly Facebook Live videos, a member of the campaign team goes ‘live’ to discuss relevant topics, share exciting announcements and issue calls to action to the campaign’s social community.
- Phase 4 – Passage of legislation
 - PA House Bill 400 was unanimously passed into law in May 2016.
 - The #IWantToWork campaign team attended the bill signing and streamed the activity on Facebook Live, reaching over 11,000 people.
- Phase 5 – Keep up the momentum for Employment First legislation
 - After the passage of House Bill 400, #IWantToWork is shifting focus to Employment First legislation which supports equal, inclusive employment opportunities for all Pennsylvania residents with disabilities.

The budget for the campaign was \$6,326.84.

Evaluation

After countless selfies and hundreds of meetings with legislators, PA House Bill 400 was unanimously passed into law in 2016, increasing state funding to support transition services for young adults with disabilities in Pennsylvania.

In late 2016, #IWantToWork began supporting Employment First legislation which supports equal, inclusive employment opportunities for all Pennsylvania residents with disabilities.

#IWantToWork by the numbers:

- Social community of 2,271 people
- 750,000 people reached with campaign messaging
- 370 selfies with legislators (nearly every member of the PA House and Senate)
- 2,341 total selfies from self-advocates, supporters and the business community
- Over 11,000 people reached with Facebook Live during the signing of House Bill 400
- 2-2.5% overall engagement is above the average for a non-profit
- 202,259 people in the state of Pennsylvania will be impacted by the legislation (according to 2015 Pennsylvania Census data)
- One bright new shiny future for young adults with disabilities