

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S WHAT THEY HEAR



UCP recently worked with Maslansky+Partners to define perceptions certain influential groups of people have about the current state of disability. The results were unexpected, but logical and have led us to make some significant changes in how we approach advocacy. UCP's national office invites you to join us in increasing the impact of the disability movement by changing the conversation.

WHY THIS, WHY NOW?

- Many of the major advocacy victories for people with disabilities happened more than 15 years ago (ADA, IDEA).
- Enthusiasm for disability advocacy has stalled – nationally, we're not talking about it as much as we should and we're not inspiring the action we once did.
- Now more than ever, people want to be involved in a "movement," but feel like they are not – this includes people with disabilities themselves.
- We cannot let support and services for people with disabilities be ignored in upcoming elections.

People with Disabilities are a Diverse and Powerful Group



say they are registered to vote



say they "nearly always" vote



would vote against a candidate who favored cuts in services



would actively support a candidate working to strengthen government services

Only **12%** feel they are part of a movement, but **19% more** want to be!

THERE ARE
NEARLY
57
MILLION
Individuals with Disabilities in the United States

WHAT CAN WE DO?

UCP is committed to changing the conversation in our communications and in future advocacy campaigns. We are taking steps to educate the media, policymakers, advocates and the general public about why language matters when reporting on, debating and discussing disability issues. We’re taking steps now to recruit a new base of grassroots advocates who have previously been left out of the conversation or were turned off. These steps include:



The publication of a language guide which we can use as a conversation starter in our advocacy and public education and outreach efforts.



The development of an affiliate toolkit with cut-and-paste copy you can use to introduce the concepts outlined in our language research along with more details about language use in advocacy.

4 WAYS TO CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

1

People think the status quo is pretty good. Talking about how bad things are falls on deaf ears.

However, people respond to technological innovation because they see the benefits in action from communication to medical care. Garner support for **IMPROVEMENTS** in the status quo, especially with **INNOVATIONS** which might benefit the entire **COMMUNITY** such as increased employment, universal design, and inclusive classrooms that enrich students without disabilities with new experiences and the perspectives of students with disabilities.

2

People don’t see a denial of rights for people with disabilities in the same light as in the fight for racial or LGBT equality. They don’t respond to calls to “fight” for the “rights” of people with disabilities or comparisons to other civil or human rights causes. They agree there is some social stigma but they feel that they PERSONALLY treat everyone equally. They’re offended that we might suggest otherwise!

People want to see themselves as part of a universal community, not set apart from people who have “special needs.” They want to be invited – are, in fact eager! – to be part of a movement.

IT’S ABOUT OPPORTUNITY

3

People want us to acknowledge that we all have struggles to overcome. The struggles may be different but the goals are the same. We all want the same things out of life.

People with disabilities and their families deserve **OPPORTUNITIES** to achieve their goals, just like everyone else. That’s a principle we all share as Americans. For people with disabilities opportunity means **ACCESS** to supports and services. Emphasize the human universals shared by people with and without disabilities alike. And, appeal to **SHARED** human experiences: family, community, productivity, knowledge, health, relationships, and happiness.

4

People want to hear about the breadth of who we serve and what we do, especially when it includes families, but they want language that is **INCLUSIVE**, not **EXCLUSIVE**. However, they expect to hear **SPECIFICS** of what we do and know that we have a **FOCUS** to our mission.

CHILDREN AND ADULTS
RANGE OF DISABILITIES
SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES
ACCESS
PERSONAL RELATABLE
OPPORTUNITIES
UNIVERSAL IN THE COMMUNITY
STARTED BY FAMILIES
PROVIDING SERVICES MORE THAN CP
UNITING PEOPLE

WHAT’S THE CORE MESSAGE?

“People with disabilities and their families have the same goals as everyone else, even if they face different challenges. All of our work is concentrated on a single goal: ensuring people with disabilities and their families have the opportunities we all deserve.

United Cerebral Palsy was founded in 1949 by family members of people with CP to help others overcome those challenges. Since then we’ve expanded our mission to unite and serve people with a broad range of disabilities, and their families – from those with Down syndrome to autism spectrum disorder to physical disabilities.

We do this by working in communities, providing supports and services to more than 176,000 children and adults every day – one person at a time, one family at a time. We provide individuals and families with services like in-home care, transportation, and training. And we work to advocate for the common sense legislation to support and protect families. At UCP we believe that while we might face different challenges, we all share the same goals and we all deserve the opportunity to try to achieve them.”



**WE HAVE
A SINGLE GOAL:**

“ensuring people with disabilities and their families have the opportunities we all deserve.”