

The NDIS and what it means for the business community

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People with a disability are the new consumers to the public marketplace. They have always been there, what I call the forgotten segment... Previously there wasn't a choice, but now there is for these consumers... They now have choice, control of which products, services and goods they would like to purchase.

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Under the scheme an NDIS participant can make decisions around things like:

- The type of supports and services they use
- Who provides them
- How they are designed and provided
- How resources are able to be used
- How funding is managed

The list of supports covered by the scheme include:

- Supports that assist to pursue goals, objectives and aspirations;
- Supports that assist in undertaking activities, leading to social and economic participation;
- Supports that are value for money, relative to the benefits and cost of alternative support.

Examples of supports include:

- Support to live and work independently in the community
- Early intervention therapies
- Home modifications
- Vehicle modifications
- Aids and equipment
- Assistance with household tasks
- Support for personal care
- Assistance with transport
- Assistance for families and carers

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The public marketplace was inaccessible to the disability sector before NDIS and this now means that a market which makes up 20% of the Australian population or 1 in 5 people are now a potential consumer/ customer for your business!

Every participant in the NDIS will have the control to purchase the services and supports that best meet their needs;

A NDIS participant who used to pay a support worker to get their shopping for them – therefore paying time, mileage fee etc can now spend the money more wisely by shopping on line and have their shopping delivered for much more less therefore having the ability to save money and allocate for other services.

Business owners know however sometimes forget — that people with disabilities have the same range of preferences, perceptions, attitudes, habits and needs that drive consumer behavior of people without disabilities.

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Existing businesses must start looking at their own business practices and assess whether they are accessible to a person with disability.

Businesses must complete a review and ask the question...Are our products, goods and services universally designed or can be used by people with disability? Are our premises and website accessible – can people with disability easily navigate our store and ask for assistance from our staff who have been trained in disability awareness and how to interact with a customer with disability?

Existing businesses should have a plan to discuss with a local disability organisation, disability peak body or an access consultant about how to make your business accessible?

Existing businesses should look at a Disability Action Plan or join a network of businesses that are already disability inclusive?

These are just some questions that mainstream businesses will have to ask themselves. Disability services and organisations will have to ask themselves some more hard hitting questions as coming along with the NDIS are new products that have been developed with the consumer opinion in mind.

One of these is a website that has been developed in Melbourne called Clickability. It is a consumer based site where the user is able to rate the service and experience that they receive when accessing an organisation. It is the 'TripAdvisor for the disability sector'. Subscribers to the app are growing daily along with the service reviews...

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Businesses shouldn't be afraid of advertising their business to people with a disability. This is a new market for people with disability and they want to see what is out there for them to access. It also makes good business sense to expand your market and review your current practices to stay fresh, relevant and be disability aware to the people you are serving. This way you can be confident that your goods/ products and services are accessible to everyone in the community.

Businesses don't have to wait to serve customers with disability until the rollout of the NDIS. People with disability access our community and businesses every day and are always on the lookout for accessible businesses, products and services that they can use.

There are businesses emerging like an Uber type model because of the NDIS. Business such as HireUp, BetterCairng, Wild Rumpus Community Services and Leisure Networks are expanding the way business is offered and done with people with disability.

HireUp is a free service where Australians with a disability can find hire and manage their own support workers.

BetterCaring is where participants can search and contact care workers, agree rates, hours and services and manage and pay for care online.

Wild Rumpus Community Services has a suite of classes and workshops for participants to review and choose for social inclusion.

Leisure Networks has services including Inclusion Support, Support Coordination and a range of activities and classes for participants to choose.

Prior to the NDIS commencing governments spent more than \$8 billion-a-year on disability services.

Around one-half of these services are provided directly by State and Territory governments.

And the remaining services were/are delivered by not-for-profit organisations who have contracts with governments under so-called block-funded arrangements.

A fraction of funding went towards individualized services.

Under the NDIS, the annual cost of disability supports will grow to \$20.6 billion by 2019-20.

That means the total market for disability supports will more than double over the next four years.

However, the contestable market for disability services will grow even faster – increasing between three- and four-fold.

Block-funded arrangements are being replaced with person-directed funding.

For instance if a NDIS participant requires minor renovations to make their home safer, the participant can now choose one handyman of their choice to do all the work around the home rather than having different trades to do the renovations therefore increasing the number of people coming and going from the house.

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The NDIS is a perfect opportunity for social entrepreneurs!

The Government has created the market, so now it is time for entrepreneurs to fill in the details. Social enterprises and businesses are required in areas ranging from personal supports and care, assistive products and equipment, to transport and home modifications.

Social entrepreneurs are required to establish organisations that enhance the social and economic participation of people with disability – objectives of the NDIS that are essential to people with disability achieving independence and the Scheme staying on budget.

What does the ideal entrepreneur look like? The ideal NDIS entrepreneur will combine a broad range of skills – the service provider (supporting people with a disability), the retailer (face to face business), the tech whiz (able to grow technology enabled, scalable businesses) and the diplomat (skilled in government relations).

But most importantly, what's needed is people with lived experience of disability – people who truly understand the needs of the Scheme's participants and who can provide innovative and more efficient services.

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Social enterprises that will make life significantly better for people with a disability, either by offering services of a higher quality than previously available; offering a new service which was previously unavailable; or offering services for less, enabling NDIS budgets to stretch further will be successful...

With an increasingly wealthy and ageing population in Australian early movers in disability care are well positioned to be able to translate successful business models to a much, much broader market.

The establishment of new businesses in current NDIS rollout areas such as dance schools for children with disability and camping adventures suited for the disability sector are just some of the business opportunities available for the NDIS market. The opportunities are endless as long as businesses understand what the consumer needs and deliver it effectively.

Being able to understand what disability consumers want and to respond to that demand will be central to business success in the NDIS.

The shift from traditional disability services to consumer driven support will see business opportunities open up in a range of areas, including everything from tourism to transport and social activities.

I mentioned earlier the disability sector represents 20% of the consumer market within Australia... Why I ask is their not 20% of advertising dollars spent marketing to this sector? Why is there not a wheel chair bound person selling car insurance or an amputee selling shoes or vision impaired person selling promoting audio books?... Businesses are yet to catch on to a consumer market that has always been there...

So how can a business remain top of mind within the disability sector?

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Go to the Source

The best way to market to any demographic is to first understand the market -- and who would know best what people with disabilities want and need than people with disabilities. People with disabilities will be able to tell you what is most important to their needs

Support the Community

Make sure your business shows local community support for people with disabilities. Introduce yourself and your business at those meetings and consider providing a 3-5 bullet flyer that highlights your businesses diversity practices – inviting job seekers with disabilities to apply for open positions, encouraging disability-owned suppliers and welcoming customers with disabilities to buy and use your products.

Engage with Local Disability Organizations and Business Leadership Networks

Affiliate your business with local disability organizations that are working to ensure the success and independence of NDIS participants. Encourage your staff to volunteer at local non-profit organizations that are focused on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities with your business.

Seek out and participate in your local Business Leadership Network to advance your disability resources and network.

Know Your Community and Market

Three words: Know your customer. Know your customer. Know your customer!

The basic building blocks of advertising and marketing make it essential to

Think Employment

As with any customer segment, the best way to tap into a demographic market is to ensure it's represented in your workforce and supply chain.

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Advertise Your Support

Make sure your business brand is inclusive by integrating people with disabilities in your advertising campaigns. The message your business will send is people of all abilities are welcome..

Advertise in Disability Media

Reach out to customers with disabilities through various disability publications and through your company's social media platforms. Today the buzz is spread through social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and your company's social media voice and platform should include disability-forward thinking and disability topics as a way to build brand loyalty and interest.

Advertise in the Mainstream Media Channels

Reach out to customers with disabilities through mainstream advertising. Friends, family, spouses and caregivers are sensitive to the needs of the disability community. When these groups come across an opportunity for the people they know and care for that are living with a disability, they will tell them about it.. more times than not...!

Always Think Diversity and Inclusion

To tap into the growing disability consumer sector, your business must remain competitive and keep its business approach relevant to people with disabilities and their immediate support community. New products, ideas and marketing efforts must reflect universal design to ensure equal access and full participation by the disability community.

NDIS participants have the control change service providers if they are not happy with the service like any consumer. For example, If you get a bad haircut or your hairdresser keeps you waiting for ages, you could complain or you may just decide not to return. Under NDIS, participants now have the same power if you aren't happy with their disability service provider. If the participants support worker is rough, late or forgets to get in the washing, they can complain, request a different support worker or look for another service provider. Participants can also change service providers if they feel they are charging too much and find a different service that provides better value for money.

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Businesses must recognize that the NDIS community is not just one market but three: adults with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and siblings, grandparents and other caretakers.

All three sub-segments have sizable spending power and are extremely loyal to businesses that make an effort to understand and accommodate their needs. Gain their loyalty, and businesses can make quite an impact with new customers and increase revenue dramatically.

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NDIS will bring financial opportunities within the following areas:

- Banks, retail, accountants, financial planners, medical and pharmacy, socials clubs, sporting clubs, health & fitness, personal care, lifestyle coaching, employment services, home care services, building, tourism, transport services, education and training... just to name a few...

By targeting your existing or new business to fit within the following categories and doing business well, you are on track to be recognised within the disability consumer market.

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Capital funded supports

- Equipment and assistive technology
- House modifications
- Vehicle modifications

Core funded supports

- Assistance with daily life at home, in the community, education and at work
- Transport to access daily activities
- Supported independent living

Capacity building funded support for support to learn and build skills

- Improved daily living skills
- Improved living arrangements
- Increased community and social participation
- Finding and keeping a job
- Improved relationships
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved learning
- Improved life choices

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Businesses in Far North Queensland can make the most of the opportunities with the NDIS coming to the north... To succeed it is important to find out what the disability sector wants, use smart targeted marketing and deliver an effective service or product... It's as simple as that...

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Health Reimagined will be rolling out services within the next 6 months to assist businesses in readiness for the NDIS, we are in the process of developing a Wellbeing and Health Alliance to service participants, we will be offering services for intake into the NDIS and care planning just to name a few...

Keep up to date with everything NDIS in the north by

- Liking the NDIS Cairns – Health Reimagined Facebook Page
- Visiting the Health Reimagined Website
- Subscribing to the HealthE Update E-Newsletter and
- Following Health Reimagined on LinkedIn

Thank you