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Building Awareness for AANE in Underserved Areas

How AANE shifted focus to website engagement, local partnerships, and user-generated content to bring visibility to their services.



BACKGROUND

The Asperger/Autism Network (AANE) works with individuals, families, and professionals to help people with Asperger Syndrome and similar autism spectrum profiles build meaningful, connected lives. They provide information, education, community, support, and advocacy - all in an atmosphere of validation and respect.

The asperger/autism community is largely underserved in urban and rural areas. By reaching these areas, AANE could help the asperger/autism community take advantage of their in-person and online support, social services, and educational programming.

AANE had seen success with their marketing efforts in suburban Boston. However, despite finding a receptive audience for their services during outreach, they had been unable to build greater awareness of AANE.



OBJECTIVE

Through a consulting project with Community Consulting Teams of Boston (CCT), AANE sought CCT's help to increase awareness of their services, particularly in urban and rural communities, and identify unique needs in these communities.

AT A GLANCE

CCT'S TACTICS

- Marketing audit
- Customer journey mapping
- Landscape analysis
- Key stakeholder and peer interviews
- Constituent survey
- Peer benchmarking

AANE'S RESPONSE

- Updated programs to increase representation and engagement
- Increased Spanish-speaking services and bilingual materials
- Created BIPOC support groups
- Built more partnerships
- Established a DEI committee
- Began a site redesign
- Increased marketing budget to hire more staff

PROJECT

CCT addressed the project in three major areas – a marketing assessment, internal analysis, and peer benchmarking.

Marketing Assessment

CCT conducted an inbound channel assessment by reviewing website contact forms and Acuity help calls, as well as speaking with external stakeholders in MA.

Internal Analysis

CCT interviewed staff to understand AANE's organizational structure, marketing processes and efforts across email, website, social media, and SEO. These insights led to an outline of the customer journey.

Peer Benchmarking

CCT researched and interviewed organizations with similar priorities, partnerships, budgets and resources. As a result, they identified industry best practices for engaging constituents with programs and services through outreach.

"The team went above and beyond, not only with the project but with our technical needs. I was thrilled with the size and expertise of our 9-person team."



CATHY AIKMAN

Director of Marketing and Communications
Asperger/Autism Network



RESULTS

Focus on Engagement

While the initial goal was increasing national awareness, CCT identified a greater need to increase engagement with those already coming to the website. The people who needed AANE's services were likely to find their site, but weren't finding the right content, converting or returning to the site.

In response, AANE added links on the homepage to their top landing pages, such as support groups and free activities, to [encourage users to navigate through their content](#). AANE focused on strengthening the digital merchandising of their services.

Urban & Rural Representation

In order to increase awareness in urban and rural parts of the state, CCT recommended that AANE [increase representation in their marketing content](#), [develop local partnerships](#), sponsor events, and conduct in-person visits with constituents and organizations in those parts of the state.

AANE updated their website messaging and imagery to convey the inclusive community AANE represents. As part of a larger site redesign, AANE is reviewing their site's information architecture and messaging hierarchy to better [share content with like-minded organizations](#).

User-Generated Content

CCT recommended that AANE develop a marketing content calendar and share more user-generated content. AANE [implemented a content calendar](#) and converted their monthly newsletter to showcase original user-generated content instead of strictly promoting their own programs and services. As a result, [newsletter sign-ups increased 50%](#) within a year - from an average of 200 per month to over 300 per month.



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