

Title: “Everyone Has a Wheelchair.”

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Motivation:

Awareness about rare-diseases is vital to promote. Too often we think of our disease as a negative factor without understanding the inspirational power it provides us. I view my condition as a bittersweet gift. By spreading awareness and normalizing “differences” we bring awareness to our specific illness. We are our own brand.

Problem statement:

We often feel helpless against our diseases. We could look at our personal situations in a different light however, the truth is, everyone is hurting somehow. Everyone has a "wheelchair," whether it be a personal trauma or a physical disability that they have to overcome. Some wheelchairs are more visible than others.

Approach:

As an entrepreneur and CEO, I approached facing my wheelchair in a maverick fashion. It is an opportunity to be a personal brand, a face for the disease, and most importantly, the subsequent research. Like a national hero selling war bonds, my mission is to shed light on a topic that many feel uncomfortable to breach - I have made it my task to carry this message to the world through local avenues and social media.

Results:

As a result, I became a well-known community leader and recognized advocate. Often, “walkers” (those without a wheelchair) share a general interest and want to understand our rare-diseases. I used the leverage to successfully develop a recovery-group after being approached to lead it. Not because I'm "special" but because I am special! Through my efforts, I was voted Saline County person of the year, bringing awareness to Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy, and even raising MDA lock-up funds - all while proactively helping other hurting people with their “wheelchairs." Of course, I couldn't have accomplished this much without the love and support of my community and family.

Conclusions:

The implications of this experience might not change the world (unlikely?), but it changed our world. This will be a significant "win", a nice “hack”, and serve as a road sign indicating that this path has exponential possibilities for the entire conference.

Biography

•Writer •Speaker •Muscular Dystrophy Advocate •CEO & Minister •Pro-Bono Coaching.

Brent is an accomplished Senior Executive with more than 20 years of success spanning security and alarms. Throughout his executive career, Brent held leadership positions with Alert America which he founded more than a decade ago. He has been featured in Arkansas Business magazine and is an active community volunteer. Brent was voted a Saline County Arkansas Person of the Year. Brent attained his Associate's degree in Theology and Theological Studies from Apostolic Bible Institute Inc. St. Paul, MN.

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