

#toylikeme

Timeline – How to grow a toy box revolution

April 2015 – A seed sprouts when Rebecca Atkinson notices the scant representation of diff:ability in the toy box and calls on fellow parents and artists to establish the #ToyLikeMe campaign on Facebook and Twitter.

Atkinson and others begin making over toys to give them diff:abilities. They take high res images in collaboration with photographer, Beth Moseley. An image of a Tinkerbelle with a hot pink cochlear implant goes viral and #ToyLikeMe amasses 1000s of followers. Atkinson writes about the campaign for the UK Guardian Newspaper.

May 2016 – #ToyLikeMe approach Makie Dolls (mymakie.com) asking them to produce dolls with diff:abilities. Makies agree and create the world's first line of 3D printed dolls with hearing aids, white canes and facial birthmarks in response to #ToyLikeMe. This story goes viral and receives global press coverage.

May 2015 – Atkinson launches a change.org petition calling on Playmobil to produce figures with diff:abilities based on the ones created for the campaign. Over 50k people sign in a week. Playmobil agree and with creative consultation from Atkinson begin to develop a range of toys in the spirit of #ToyLikeMe.

June 2015 – Atkinson and fellow artist Kate Read create a Lego Wheelchair Skatepark and launch a change.org petition calling on Lego. Over 20k people sign.

August 2015 – #ToyLikeMe publically criticise Lego for a Duplo wheelchair which is coupled with a grandparent figure and panders to disability stereotypes. This story goes global. Atkinson advocates in Huffington Post the need for diff:ability representation that doesn't adhere to medical or elderly stereotypes.

November 2015 – Lego Ideas platform (where fans can submit and vote on design ideas) reject a submission from #ToyLikeMe of the Lego Wheelchair Skatepark, citing that they do not accept submissions with a 'political agenda' as the design contains the #ToyLikeMe hashtag.

December 2015 – #ToyLikeMe renew call on Lego with Christmas Wands 'n' Wheels submission to Lego Ideas. Within days of being uploaded, Wands 'n' Wheels becomes the most popular design on Lego Ideas. #ToyLikeMe launch Lego advent calendar – a series of 24 images featuring Lego products with diff:abilities in call on the global toy brand. Atkinson writes in the UK Guardian newspaper about the need for Lego mini-figures with wheelchairs.

January 2016 – Rebecca Atkinson is included in Power100 list 2016 citing the most influential diff:abled people in the UK for her work on #ToyLikeMe

January 2016 – #ToyLikeMe launch Crowd Fund to raise capital to create a website hub to celebrate diff:ability in toys.

January 2016 – At Nuremberg Toy Fair Lego unveil their first wheelchair using mini-figure to global praise. The press widely attribute this to the influence of #ToyLikeMe. Fans around the world are delighted. Atkinson writes in the UK Guardian newspaper about the cultural significance of the Lego Wheelchair mini-figure.

February 2016 – #ToyLikeMe reaches crowd fund goal to build a new website after over 700 people pledge support.

March 2016 – Rebecca Atkinson receives grant approval from Arts Council England to develop an animation/book premise in the spirit of #ToyLikeMe.

March 2016 – Images of a production line of #ToyLikeMe makeover Tinkerbelle dolls with hot pink cochlear implants go viral receiving press coverage from Mirror and Metro.

June 2016 – #ToyLikeMe is awarded Arts Council England funding to create a public facing photography exhibition in collaboration with Beth Moseley Photography.

July 2016 – Rebecca Atkinson is shortlisted for Toy News Woman of the Year 2016.

July 2016 – Rebecca Atkinson addresses 2016 Children's Media Conference to call on all children's industries to rethink the way they approach diff:ability representation.

July 2016 – Rebecca Atkinson is shortlisted for Red Magazine Awards 2016 for her work on #ToyLikeMe.

August 2016 – Harper and David Beckham are photographed with a toy wheelchair. The image is carried by tabloid press and the upturn in interest in diff:abled toys fuelled by #ToyLikeMe is discussed in a Daily Mail column by Sarah Vine.

Sept 2016 – #ToyLikeMe launch toylikeme.org, an online hub to connect customers with products and continue the call on the global toy industry to better represent diff:ability.

Oct 2017 – #ToyLikeMe is awarded support from the School of Social Entrepreneur in Yorkshire and the North East. Including a £4000 grant and mentoring.

Nov 2016 – The work of #ToyLikeMe is mentioned in The Beazley Designs of the Year exhibition at London Design Museum.

Nov 2016 – #ToyLikeMe launch Toy Box Tales, an exhibition of 12 stunning photographic images celebrating disability in toys. The images are available to view at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and online at toylikeme.org

Nov 2016 – Rebecca presents to city law firm Baker Mackenzie about the work of #ToyLikeMe. Baker McKenzie offer support of pro bono legal advice.

January 2017– Rebecca Atkinson is included in Power100 list 2017 citing the most influential disabled people in the UK for her work on #ToyLikeMe

March 2017 – Arts Council funded Toy Box Tales images are loaned to Paintings in Hospitals charity and begin five year tour of NHS trusts including Great Ormond Street children's hospital.

May 2017 – #ToyLikeMe incorporates as a not-for-profit community interest company with support and mentoring from the Yorkshire and North East School of Social Entrepreneurs.

July 2017 – #ToyLikeMe is included in a report by the British Council detailing British disability design.

September 2017 – Lottie doll become first toy brand to back #ToyLikeMe campaign with launch of Mia doll with cochlear implant. The doll carries the 'Loved by #ToyLikeMe' brand endorsement and is available worldwide.

September 2017 – Rebecca, Karen and a team of 10 run Parallel London fun run and raise over £2000

Autumn 2017 – #ToyLikeMe collaborate with Girl Guiding Anglia to create a challenge and badge looking at disability stereotyping and representation in toys.

We've grown to the clouds. Next we hope to reach the moon!

