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Today's Tip

ABOUT
Want to improve the way you run your business? Entrepreneurs, academics, and consultants from diverse industries offer practical advice on a variety of topics each business day.

Make Your Business Accessible to People with Disabilities

Posted by: Today's Tip Contributor on August 13, 2010

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires small businesses to provide accessible goods and services to people with disabilities. Many small businesses find that complying with the ADA not only meets their legal obligations, but also expands their customer base to include the more than 50 million people with disabilities who represent \$175 billion in spending power. The following are things small businesses should do to meet the needs of consumers with disabilities:

- 1. Make your building accessible.** Accessible parking, ramps, counters, and restrooms are all required by the ADA. Businesses do not, however, have to become fully accessible at once. The ADA requires small businesses to do what is "readily achievable."—that is, do what can be done easily without undo expense. Business owners should place a priority on changes that get customers in the door, such as accessible parking and wider doorways.
- 2. Provide effective communication.** Sometimes in order to communicate effectively with customers with disabilities, businesses will need to provide additional services. Customers who are blind may need a Braille menu or have the menu read to them. Passing notes back and forth or adaptive equipment, such as a face-to-face communicator, can be used to assist people who are deaf. Note: Businesses may not charge additional fees for providing these services.
- 3. Modify policies and procedures.** Policies may inadvertently keep people with disabilities from using your services. For example, a business may require a driver's license to rent items. A commonsense modification for an individual who is blind would be to accept another form of identification.
- 4. Take advantage of tax incentives.** Both a tax credit and tax deduction are available to help offset the costs of making businesses accessible. Information on these tax incentives is available at www.ada.gov/taxincent.htm.

5. Get technical assistance if you have questions. The ADA National Network consists of 10 regional ADA centers that provide free technical assistance. Call 1-800-949-4232 to reach an ADA Center in your region.

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Original website can be found here:

http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/tips/archives/2010/08/make_your_business_accessible_to_people_with_disabilities.html