

Retail Businesses

More businesses are beginning to respond to the impact of dementia on both customers and employees. Customer service and human resource strategies have begun to address the questions of how to meet the needs of customers living with dementia and their care partners, as well as the needs of employees who are caring for someone living with the disease.



Customer Perspective

- With 70% of people living with dementia living at home, they and their family care partners will choose businesses that are easy to navigate and that have helpful, aware staff.
- A dementia friendly business is good business that will help retain existing customers and employees and attract new ones.

Employee Perspective

Alzheimer's disease costs US businesses more than \$34 billion a year in lost productivity due to absenteeism by primary care partners, workday distractions, supervisory time, and reductions in hours.²

Magnitude: 15 million people care for someone living with Alzheimer's and 6.6 million of those people are employed.

Baby boomers are a valued, experienced segment of the workforce. They are the primary population caring for a spouse or parent living with dementia as well the generation most likely affected by early onset of the disease.

Ready to implement dementia friendly practices? Follow the steps:

1

Prepare

- Recognize signs of dementia
- Use dementia friendly business practices, such as creating a dementia friendly environment.

2

Learn

- Learn to use dementia friendly communication skills.
- Know local services that help people living with dementia and their care partners.

3

Respond

- Establish policies that support and accommodate employees who are care partners to people living with dementia.
- Spread dementia friendly principles to other businesses and the community.

Signs of Dementia⁴

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
- Challenges in planning or solving problems.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
- Confusion with time or place.
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.
- New problems with words in speaking or writing.
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
- Decreased or poor judgment.
- Withdrawal from work or social activities.
- Changes in mood or personality.

Dementia Friendly Communication Skills^{1,5}

- Slow pace slightly and allow time for person to process and respond.
- Use shorter simple sentences, and ask one question at a time.
- Speak clearly and calmly, be patient and understanding; listen.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.
- Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.
- Be aware of your body language: smile and make eye contact at eyelevel.
- Seek to understand the person's reality or feelings.
- Apologize and redirect to another environment or subject as needed.

Dementia Friendly Business & Environment Practices

Business Tips:

- Treat all customers with respect and dignity, including those living with dementia and their care partners.
- Foster a connection with the customer's care partners when appropriate, especially when important transactions are involved, to help protect the customer's interests.
- Provide assistance with finding the correct merchandise and checkout assistance. Offer less options if person seems overwhelmed.

Environment Tips:

- Indoor environments should be safe and accessible for people living with dementia: well-lit hallways, uncluttered spaces, and prominent, easy-to-understand signs for restrooms and other important places.
- Provide quiet places to sit and relax.
- Provide family restrooms to allow for care partners to assist if necessary
- Reduce background noise as much as possible

Support Employee Care Partners

- Talk with employees and show that you understand they are juggling two jobs – one as a care partner, and one working for you.
- Help employees connect to community resources.
- Establish policies and practices supportive to care partners, such as work schedule flexibility, and inform employees of these policies.
- Ask for employee feedback on company's responsiveness and efforts to support elder care partner needs.

Additional Resources

1. **Business Training – Alzheimer's Friendly Business online course provided by Home Instead and the HISC Network**
<https://www.helpforalzheimersfamilies.com/interactive-course/#/>
2. **AARP, Understanding the Impact of Family Caregiving on Work**
http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/ltc/2012/understanding-impact-family-caregiving-work-AARP-ppi-ltc.pdf
3. **Alzheimer's Association, Know the 10 Signs**
<http://www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp>
4. **AARP – How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers**
<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/life-balance/info-2017/ways-to-support-working-caregivers-lh.html>
5. **Alzheimer's Society – Communicating**
https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/info/20064/symptoms/90/communicating_and_language
6. **Dementia Friendly Iowa**
<https://dementiafriendlyiowa.org/>
7. **Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Dementia Friendly Employers Toolkit**
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia/employers.htm>

Dementia Friendly America

- **DFA Sector Video - Retail**
<http://www.dfamerica.org/sector-videos/>
- **Dementia Friendly @ Work**
<http://www.dfamerica.org/business-training/>

Businesses are just one important part of the community. By working in tandem with other sectors, businesses can help make the entire community more dementia friendly. Learn more about the process and help your community and others become more dementia friendly at www.dfamerica.org.



Adapted from ACT on Alzheimer's® developed tools and resources.