

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 with dementia and their care partners, as well as the needs of employees who are caring for someone with the disease.



## Customer Perspective

- With 70% of people 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.
- Dementia friendly business is good business that will help retain existing customers and employees and attract new ones. Access training at Home Instead Business Training.<sup>1</sup>

## Employee Perspective

- Alzheimer's disease costs US businesses more than \$60 billion a year in lost productivity, absenteeism by primary care partners, and insurance costs.<sup>2</sup>
- Magnitude: 15 million people care for someone 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 with dementia as well the generation most likely affected by early onset of the disease.
- Businesses that support their caregiving employees are not just benevolent - they are smart: every \$1 companies spend on eldercare support reaps a \$3 to \$14 return.<sup>3</sup>

## 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 with dementia and their care partners.

3

### Respond

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

## Signs of Dementia<sup>4</sup>

- 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<sup>1,5</sup>

- 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 eye level.
- 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 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.
- Learn more and continue to implement new ways to be responsive to needs of customers with dementia and their care partners.

## Environment Tips:

- Provide quiet places to sit and relax.
- Indoor environments should be safe and accessible for people with dementia: well-lit hallways, uncluttered spaces, and prominent, easy-to-understand signs for restrooms and other important places.

## 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<sup>6</sup>, 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.

## References

1. **Business Training – Alzheimer's Friendly Business online course provided by Home Instead and the HISC Network**  
<http://www.helpforalzheimersfamilies.com/alzheimers-care-training/alzheimers-friendly-business-training/>
2. **Alzheimer's Foundation of America**  
<http://www.alzfdn.org/AboutAlzheimers/cost.html>
3. **AARP, How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers, June 2013**  
<http://www.aarp.org/work/employers/info-06-2013/employers-support-working-caregivers.html>
4. **Alzheimer's Association, Know the 10 Signs**  
[http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_10\\_signs\\_of\\_alzheimers.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp)
5. **Alzheimer's Society – Communicating**  
[http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?documentID=130](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=130)
6. **AARP – How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers**  
<http://www.aarp.org/work/employers/info-06-2013/employers-support-working-caregivers.1.html>

## Additional Resources

### Alzheimer's Association

- **Alzheimer's Workplace Alliance**  
<http://www.alz.org/AWA/AWA.asp>
- **Community Resource Finder**  
<http://www.communityresourcefinder.org>
- **24/7 Helpline, 1-800-272-3900**  
<http://www.alz.org>

### Administration on Aging

- **National Family Caregiver Support Program**  
[http://www.aoa.gov/AoA\\_programs/HCLTC/Caregiver/index.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/AoA_programs/HCLTC/Caregiver/index.aspx)

### National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

- **Powerful Tools for Caregivers**  
<http://www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org/>

### AARP

- **Caregiving Resource Center**  
[http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/?cmp=RDRCT-CRGVER\\_APR12\\_012](http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/?cmp=RDRCT-CRGVER_APR12_012)
- **REACT Employer Resources**  
<http://www.aarp.org/react/react-employer-caregiving-resources/>

### ACT on Alzheimer's

- **Dementia Friendly @ Work**  
<http://actonalz.org/dementia-friendly-work>

### Others

- **National Alliance for Caregiving**  
<http://www.caregiving.org>
- **Caregiver Action Network**  
<http://www.caregiveraction.org>
- **AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving, REACT**  
(Respect a Caregiver's Time – Employee Resource Guide – Four Steps for Supporting Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities)  
<http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/home-and-family/caregiving/ReAct/employer-resource-guide.pdf>
- **Direct Marketing Association**  
(The Contact Centres and Telemarketing Council – Nov 2012 - Guidelines for Call Centres dealing with vulnerable consumers)  
[http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/assets/0000/7615/call-centres-vulnerable-consumers\\_final.pdf](http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/assets/0000/7615/call-centres-vulnerable-consumers_final.pdf)
- **National Alliance for Caregiving**  
The MetLife Study of Working Caregivers and Employer Health Care Costs, 2010
- **US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Employer Best Practices for Workers with Caregiving Responsibilities**  
<http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/caregiver-best-practices.html>
- **Your Call is Important to Us: Improving access to contact centers**  
<http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/advice-and-publications/publications/your-call-is-important-to-us/>

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](http://www.dfamerica.org).



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