



The ADA and Small Business

The goal of the ADA is to ensure that everyone has equal access to goods and services in their community. For small business, this equal access translates into enabling your customers with disabilities (and their friends and family) to spend their money with YOU! For the past 27 years, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has required businesses that provide goods and services to the general public, to do the same for customers with disabilities.

Let's take a look at how you can facilitate access to your business...

The discretionary spending power of people with Disabilities is \$225 Billion.

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

Francis of Assisi

Change your approach.

One option under the ADA is to offer alternatives to your policies and practices to help ensure access to your customers. For example, consider curb-side service for a take-out business that has stairs to get in, if it is not readily achievable for you to ramp the entrance. There are tax credits and deductions available to help offset the costs of removing barriers to access through the IRS.

Communicating with customers.

Under the ADA, business owners should consider practical solutions to apply when communicating with customers. At a retail shop, that may be writing notes back and forth with a customer that is deaf when discussing a simple transaction. If you are a mortgage company, you can use new technologies such as Video Remote Interpreting so that everyone understands the terms of the contract. You can improve accessibility for visually impaired web users and improve your search engine optimization by providing features such as alternate text for graphics.

Getting in the door.

The ADA strikes a balance between providing access to the built environment and financial burdens for small businesses. Consider your customer’s experience visiting your business. Ask yourself, can someone using a wheelchair or someone that has difficulty with steps get in my front door and access my goods? If you offer restrooms to your customers, are they accessible? Take a look around at other areas your customers use and see how you can improve the customer experience through greater access. That being said, the accessibility requirements can be confusing. Reach out to your local ADA Center for no-cost guidance and support.

Can you afford not to provide access?

About 56.7 million people in the United States have a disability. That’s about 19% of our population. Each of these people is a potential customer for your small business.

**Want to increase your customers and business activity?
Contact the ADA National Network at www.adaTA.org | 1.800.949.4232**