

Seven Steps to Great Customer Service

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Overview

The Disability Travel Market—ODO Research Seven Steps to Great Customer Service

1. Fine Tune Your Property
2. Designate an Access Manager or Coordinator
3. Promote Your Accessibility
4. Educate Staff About Facilities and Services
5. Provide Disability Awareness Training
6. Meet Individual Needs
7. Resolve Complaints Promptly

Resources



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ODO Travel Market Studies

- 2002 and 2005
 - First-ever nationwide surveys on American travelers with disabilities
 - Conducted by Harris Interactive
- Objectives
 - Measure travel frequency, expenditure and resources used to plan and book travel
 - Gauge experiences with airlines, airports, hotels, restaurants and car rental agencies (2005)
 - Determine obstacles encountered in travel and hospitality
 - Estimate market impact and potential



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ODO Research—General Travel

- In 2005 69% of adults with disabilities (or 21 million people) had traveled at least once over the prior two years, vs. 71% in 2002.
- On average they took 2 trips over the two-year period (63 million trips), mostly for pleasure.
- As in 2002, there a subgroup of more frequent travelers– 20% of all adults with disabilities travel at least 6 times every two years.
- In 2002, expenditure on travel totaled \$27 billion over a two-year period or \$13.5 billion annually



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ODO Research—Internet Use

- When planning a trip, the Internet is an important resource for adults with disabilities. Half of those who travel (51%) use the Internet to book their trips.
 - According to Travel Industry Association, only 40% of the general public booked online in 2005
- Almost half of travelers (43%) say they consult the Internet to support their disability-related travel needs. For these travelers, the top ways they use the Internet are:
 - Finding and/or booking accessible hotels (57%);
 - Finding accessibility information about airlines (47%); and,
 - Finding accessible activities, tours, and attractions at their destination (47%).



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ODO Research—Hotels

- In 2005, 52% of adults with disabilities had stayed in a hotel or other lodging during the two-year period (or 16.3 million hotel users), and 56% of their trips involved hotel stays.
- Hotel users generally stay in hotels 3 times every two years (or 48.9 million visits). This represents an increase from 2 times every two years in 2002.
- Satisfaction with hotels increased from 2002. However, 60% of hotel users reported disability-related obstacles: physical (48%), service/personnel (45%) or communication-related (15%)



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ODO Research—Hotels

- In 2002, expenditure on hotels totaled \$8.3 billion over a two-year period or \$4.2 billion annually
- Hotel users say they would stay in hotels 2 more times per year if hotels were to accommodate their needs as a person with a disability. This means that hotel spending could double if hotels were to make necessary accommodations
- The top features or services that hotels would need to offer to encourage more frequent hotel stays are 1) rooms close to entrance, hotel restaurants and transportation and 2) more accommodating staff



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ODO Research—Restaurants

- Adults with disabilities generally patronize fast food restaurants once per week, and casual restaurants and more formal restaurants less frequently.

	% who patronize at least once a week		Median Personal Expenditures (of those who patronize restaurant)
	2002	2005	
Fast food restaurants	53%	50%	\$5
Casual dining restaurants (e.g. T.G.I. Friday's or Outback)	36%	42%	\$12
More formal restaurants	35%	22%	\$20



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ODO Research—Restaurants

- In the 2005 ODO Study, two-thirds of adults (64%) with disabilities encountered obstacles when eating out at restaurants: physical (62%), service/personnel (27%) and communication-related (22%).
 - The most common complaint was lack of space between tables (40%)

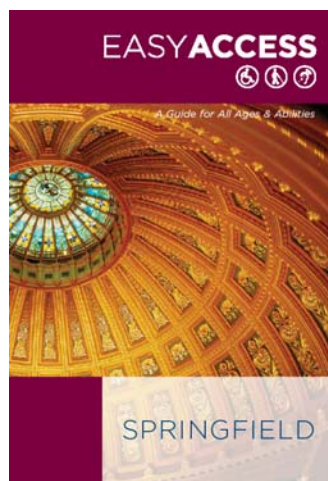


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ODO Easy Access Guides

- **Easy Access Chicago**
www.easyaccesschicago.org
- **Easy Access Springfield**
www.easyaccessspringfield.org

Print copies: IL Office of Tourism
www.enjoyillinois.com/brochures
(800) 226-6632 or 785-6055 TTY



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Seven Steps to Great Customer Service



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- Many common barriers are often simple and inexpensive to fix
 - Heavy doors
 - 2005 ODO Study—36% of respondents listed this as a barrier in hotels, 33% in restaurants
 - For exterior doors, add a door bell or an automatic door opener as the budget allows
 - Door knobs, latches and switches that require tight grasping/twisting



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- Pay attention to furniture and other non-structural items (often not covered by ADA Access Standards)
 - Hotel room furniture
 - Beds too high for easy transfer—Adjustable beds are the “universally accessible” solution
 - Platform type beds—prevent use of Hoyer lifts
 - Handles/knobs on furniture—Closed fist test
 - Too much furniture for the space—blocks ADA paths of travel and turning spaces



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- Dining tables
 - Include an accessible table or coffee table and chairs in a bar area, not just high counters/stools
 - Beware of pedestal bases that block toe clearance
 - Leave enough space between tables...with the chairs pulled out
 - Provide paths of travel to different sections so that customers have a choice of dining area
 - 2005 ODO Study—Main customer service obstacle in restaurants was “Lack of availability of seating I want”



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- Restrooms
 - Put a soap dispenser on the counter as well as a stack of paper towels so these are in everyone's reach
 - Add a handle on the outside as well as inside of the accessible stall door
 - Reverse door swing if it swings in and blocks access
 - Remove a sink in the wheelchair stall if it blocks lateral transfer space



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- Watch out for moveable items that can block access
 - In hotels, potted plants and brochure stands on the lowered counter at registration
 - In restaurants, extra chairs in hallways leading to restrooms
 - In restrooms, waste bins or small tables
 - In stores/gift shops, moveable display racks



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- In hotels, train housekeeping staff to prepare adapted rooms for guests using wheelchairs
 - Leave adjustable showerhead at lowest position
 - Put remotes on bedside table, not on top of TV cabinet
 - Don't hang towels on grab bars
- Have a staff member accompany guest to room to make any changes needed without having to call the front desk



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Step 1: Fine Tune Your Property

- Beware of overhead hazards and protruding objects that are not cane detectable
 - Unenclosed staircases—put detectable barrier underneath such as a rail or potted plants
 - Wall-mounted TVs in guest rooms
 - Common protruding objects—drinking fountains, fire extinguishers, wall sconces



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Step 2: Designate An Access Manager

- The most effective way to create and maintain accessibility over time is to assign responsibility for oversight to one person, the Access Manager or Coordinator
 - Becomes the “go-to” person in the company
 - Can help prevent and resolve complaints
 - Brings the “access” perspective to all policies, facilities and services
 - Will need to develop expertise
 - See Resources. Professional organizations such as AH&LA and NRA also have training materials available.



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Step 3: Promote Your Accessibility

- For customers with disabilities, readily available information is a highly valued customer service
- Post specific information online about your accessible facilities and services
- Make it easy to find by including a universal access symbol on the home page with a link to the access information
- Websites should themselves meet accessibility standards—See Resources



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Step 3: Promote Your Accessibility

- Hotels and Motels
 - Post specific information online about your accessible facilities, services and policies. For ease of use, list by general type of disability: Hearing, Vision, Mobility
 - Information could include:
 - Accessible public areas, Automatic entry doors
 - Wheelchair accessible room types—list features
 - Hearing-Adapted Rooms--list features
 - Adaptive equipment—Mobility, Hearing, Vision
 - Information in Braille, Large Print or Recorded Message: Menus, Hotel Information
 - Airport shuttle: If not accessible, how much advance notice is required for your outside supplier?



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Step 3: Promote Your Accessibility

- Hotels and Motels
 - Ideally, persons with disabilities should be able to reserve a specific type of accessible room online and have it blocked for their arrival
 - Currently possible from only a few hotel chains
 - Hotels.com and Expedia.com now provide basic access information for all properties
 - Does not include bed count/type for adapted rooms
 - Once guest reserves, their staff call property to confirm availability and contact guest to confirm or try to find equivalent hotel in same price range



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Step 3: Promote Your Accessibility

- Hotels and Motels
 - List adaptive equipment in hotel information provided in guestrooms
 - Post a sign at the front desk noting availability of TTY and ADA Visual Alerting Devices
 - Include access information including room counts on sales kits for meeting planners and travel agents
 - Include an accessible guest room on hotel tours along with standard rooms and suites



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Step 3: Promote Your Accessibility

- Restaurants
 - On websites, provide access details on entrance, dining areas and restroom. Note if the latter is single use.
 - Include other features/services, if available:
 - Do you have brighter or quieter seating areas available?
 - Do you have a Braille or large print menu?
 - Are specials listed in print as well as announced verbally?
 - Can you handle special dietary requests? What types?
 - Post menus online—If your site is accessible, then patrons with vision loss can check out the menu in advance
 - Take reservations by email—Make booking easy for persons with hearing and speech disabilities



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Step 4: Educate About Features/Services

- The same access information provided customers needs to be at the fingertips of front desk and reservations staff
 - Prospective guests should not have to call engineering or housekeeping with questions about rooms or equipment
- In the 2005 ODO Study, the second most common Service/Personnel problem in hotels: “Personnel not being aware of services provided for people with disabilities.”



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Step 5: Provide Awareness Training

- “Personnel being insensitive or unwelcoming to people with disabilities ” and “Unwelcoming attitudes toward service animals” were reported as obstacles at restaurants and, to a lesser extent, hotels in the 2005 ODO Study
- Disability-Awareness Training helps remove the “Fear Factor” which makes staff seem unwelcoming when they are actually afraid of doing or saying the wrong thing



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Step 5: Provide Awareness Training

- Give your staff the skills they need to succeed
- Focus on basic customer service
 - How to interact appropriately with persons with physically, sensory (hearing and visual), learning and hidden disabilities
 - “How may I assist you?”
- Teach “person-first” language and words to avoid
 - “Person with a disability”, “Man who is blind”
 - The word “handicapped” is offensive to many Americans with disabilities. Say instead “accessible” parking or guest room.



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Step 5: Provide Awareness Training

- Provide training on basic assistance techniques
 - Guiding techniques and providing orientation or directions to someone who is blind
 - Making change for a customer who is blind and using a signature guide
 - Assisting someone with a service animal
 - Assisting someone with a wheelchair
 - Communicating with persons who have hearing, speech or learning disabilities



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Step 5: Provide Awareness Training

- Provide specialized training as needed for specific job responsibilities. For example:
 - How to operate a TTY—front desk, reservations, room service, etc.
 - How to set up an ADA Kit with alerting devices and TTY in a guest room—for engineering or housekeeping staff
- Put special emphasis on safety and emergency policies and procedures for customers and guests with disabilities



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Step 5: Provide Awareness Training

- Involve local disability organizations such as Centers for Independent Living in training sessions
- Both initial and recurrent training are recommended to keep skills fresh
- Hiring people with disabilities also raises awareness and breaks down attitudinal barriers



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Step 6: Meet Individual Needs

- Since customers, with or without disabilities are unique, meeting individual needs is fundamental to all good service
- The ADA requires business to modify policies, practices and facilities in order to provide nondiscriminatory service to a particular individual with a disability
 - However, you are **not required** to make modifications that would constitute an **undue burden** or **fundamentally alter your program**



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Step 7: Resolve Complaints Promptly

- By attempting to meet individual needs, disability-related complaints can be minimized
- Staff should know how to resolve simple problems themselves and whom to direct problems to, typically a manager or access manager, if one exists
- Managers should be trained to a higher level with regard to ADA requirements and complaint resolution techniques



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Resources

- ❑ DBTAC National Network of ADA Centers
www.adata.org or 800-949-4232 (V/TTY)
- ❑ Dept. of Justice ADA Home Page, www.ada.gov
ADA Information Line: (800) 514-0301 or 514-0383 TTY
- ❑ Access Board, www.access-board.gov
Technical Assistance: (800)872-2253 or 993-2822 TTY
- ❑ 508 Universe: The Federal IT Accessibility Initiative
Training. “Accessible Conferences” and “Designing
Accessible Websites,” www.section508.gov
- ❑ Web Accessibility Initiative, www.w3.org/WAI



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Resources

- ❑ Downloadable Disability Access Symbols
www.graphicartistsguild.org/resources/disability-access-symbols/
- ❑ Open Doors Organization
www.opendoorsnfp.org
info@opendoorsnfp.org
 - Services include Disability-Awareness Training and Accessibility Audits
 - Free CD on request: “Assistive Devices for Hotels and Restaurants”



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Thank you!



Questions?

