

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 dementia.

Customer

Perspective

* 80% of people living with dementia live at home, and this number is only projected to rise.1 These individuals along with their care partners are more likely to choose businesses who are informed and inclusive of people living with dementia.
* A dementia friendly business is an inclusive and prepared business that will help retain existing customers and employees and attract new ones. Access training at Home Instead Business Training.2

Employee Perspective

* Alzheimer’s disease produces extreme economic tolls, on individuals, families, and businesses. Absenteeism by primary care partners, workday distractions, productivity losses and replacement costs can be valued at a $36.5 billion dollar loss to businesses. 5
* Magnitude: More than 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for a family member or friend living with dementia, which is valued at about $340 billion. 3
* 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.4

# Ready to implement dementia friendly practices?

Follow these steps:

1

3

2

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.

Learn

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

Prepare

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

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a general term for a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that is serious enough to interfere with activities of daily life. Dementia has many causes. Alzheimer’s disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a disease of the brain that leads to problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Alzheimer’s and other dementias are not a normal part of aging.

Signs of Dementia 10

* Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
* Challenges in planning or solving problems.
* Confusion when completing familiar tasks at home, at work, and/or during leisure activities.
* Confusion with time or place.
* Challenges when attempting to understand visual images and spatial relationships.
* Challenges with words when speaking, writing, and/or reading.
* Accidently misplacing items 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

* + Ask “yes” or “no” questions 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 actively listen.
  + Treat the person living with dementia 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 individuals 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.
* Learn more and continue to implement new ways to be responsive to needs of customers living with dementia and their care partners.

**Environment Tips:**

* Provide quiet places to sit and relax since a loud environment can overstimulate an individual living with dementia.
* Indoor environments should be safe and accessible for people with dementia, such as including:
* Well-lit hallways
* Uncluttered spaces
* 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, 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. **Caregiving for a Person with Alzheimer’s Disease or a Related Dementia**[Caregiving for Person with Alzheimer's Disease or a related Dementia | Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/alzheimer.htm#:~:text=What%20is%20known%20about%20caregiving,receiving%20care%20in%20their%20homes.)
2. **Business Training – Alzheimer’s Friendly Business online course provided by Home Instead and the HISC Network** <https://www.helpforalzheimersfamilies.com/interactive-course/#/>
3. **2023 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures**[alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf](https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf)
4. **How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers**[How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers, Resource Center (aarp.org)](https://www.aarp.org/work/employers/employers-support-working-caregivers/)
5. **Alzheimer's Disease: The Costs to U.S Businesses in 2002 Alzheimer’s Association, Know the 10 Signs** <http://www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp>
6. [Alzheimer's Disease: The Costs to U.S. Businesses in 2002](https://www.alz.org/national/documents/report_alzcosttobusiness.pdf)
7. **Alzheimer’s Society – Communicating** <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/info/20064/symptoms/90/communicating_and_language>
8. **Communication Tips for Dementia Friendly Communities**
   1. <https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Communication+Tips+for+Dementia+Friendly+Communities/1_a9lvf8p1>
9. **Dementia Friendly Businesses – USAging** 
   1. <https://www.usaging.org/content.asp?contentid=431>
10. **Alzheimer’s Association, Know the 10 Signs** <http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp>

Additional Resources

For additional resources related to the *Business* sector and a host of other community sectors, please visit [DFA's resource page](https://dfamerica.org/resource-listing/).

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Businesses are just one important part of the community. By working in tandem with other community 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/)