"Accessibility Smart Businesses" Information Packages

BACKGROUND

At least 20% of customers have a disability - either visible or non-visible- and because of this businesses need to consider all the ways they can enhance their accessibility. In fact, over the next 20 years, an aging population and people with disabilities will represent 40% of total income in Ontario - $536 Billion. By improving accessibility in Ontario businesses have the potential to generate $49.6 Billion in new retail spending.

Helping your business members respond to your community's increasing need for accessible services is a vital role that BIAs can play. Your business members can benefit from having the perspective and insights of employees with various disabilities to tap into expanding consumer markets. Employees with disabilities can help a business to better market to customers with disabilities and will gain the loyalty of friends and family members of people with disabilities in your community.

To this end, we have developed these seven information kits with content that you can share with your members to increase their awareness and consideration of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities.

INSTRUCTIONS

As part of the "Accessibility Smart Businesses" Project, we have prepared seven information packages on the topic of hiring people with disabilities. These information kits address the questions, concerns, and misunderstandings that we have heard from small businesses about hiring persons with disabilities.

You can use the material in these kits in whole, in part or as suits your purposes. The kit content has been designed to be flexible and can used in a variety of your communication vehicles, including your newsletter, website, social media, and local media. Each kit has a specific theme but you can mix and match as you please. Some items, such as the Media Release, Articles and Social Media posts have instructions in [square brackets] to highlight areas that you can adjust to specifically target your members. Additionally, you will see [link] which signifies where you can place a link to kit content that you post on your website or to direct them to OBIAA's website.

Keeping accessibility alive through your member communications will remind businesses to consider accessibility in their business practices, assist them with practical tips and resources to become leaders in accessibility, and position them as being proactive to your community's changing needs.

THEMES

After consultation with BIA staff across the province, we designed these kits around key issues and questions that businesses raised with respect to accessible employment. You will find in these kits ready-made media releases for each topic area, case studies and articles, quick tips and checklists, resources for further study, and social media content ready for you to use right away. The kit themes are:

- Kit 1: AODA
- Kit 2: Employment Myths
- Kit 3: Fears
- Kit 4: Barriers
- Kit 5: Business Benefits
- Kit 6: Support
- Kit 7: Funding

Some kits include external documents in a Resource folder found in the Members Portal of the OBIAA website (go to "Resources" and search for "AODA"). Other kits only include external links to web content. You can choose to post those external resources on your website and direct people there to view them or you can direct them to OBIAA's website.

CONTACT

If you would like further information on OBIAA's Accessibility Smart Businesses Project or these kits, please contact Constance Exley, OBIAA Project Manager at director@accessontario.com.

SOCIAL MEDIA 101

Many BIAs are active in the social media realm but, for those who aren't, we have prepared a quick primer to some of the social media platforms and tools we think you will find helpful.

Social media is a highly valuable resource to any organization. It makes building awareness and sharing information fun and approachable without advanced computer knowledge. A huge percentage of the population uses social media in their day-to-day. Its simple to use and reaches a wide audience.

Note: All social media platforms and supports listed in this document are free or have no-fee plan options.

Types of Social Media

Facebook:
Facebook is the most widely used social media platform in the world. Users can share posts and write status updates to share within their friends or publically.

LinkedIn:
You can think of LinkedIn as the Facebook of the business world. Similar to Facebook, you can add Connections (friends and business contacts), share posts, join groups etc.

Twitter:
Twitter posts are limited to [#] characters. Posts can include images, videos, and hyperlinks .

There are also other social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest that are image based. The kits do not provide images to use for these, but you are welcome to promote content through these channels.

Social Media Supports

There are many supports for social media integration at your BIA. Below we have collected some commonly used ones.

Tweetdeck
Tweetdeck allows you to schedule tweets, retweets, and organize lists of followers and hashtags across multiple Twitter accounts.

Hootsuite
Hootsuite is similar to Tweetdeck with the addition of the ability to post to other platforms beyond Twitter, such as Facebook or Google+.Mailchimp

Mailchimp is a popular e-newsletter platform that you can integrate into your website.