

« Bonjour »

“Welcome”

The Business Assistance Program

Getting Started

Putting bilingualism into practice in your business means making your customers feel comfortable asking for services and communicating in their preferred language. Your professionalism in this area will be appreciated by your clientele and the benefits will be yours to reap.

What's in it for you?

- Reach a larger proportion of your target clientele
- Increase your client base and establish client loyalty
- Enhance the quality of your customer service
- Exceed your clients' expectations
- Make your clients feel valued and respected

Service in person and on the telephone — First impressions count!

- Identify bilingual staff by having them wear a pin or button reading “English/Français”, thus prompting customers to address them in the language of their choice
- Have bilingual staff greet customers in French and English: “Hello, Bonjour” or “Bonjour! May I help you?”
- Ensure that unilingual staff refer customers to an employee who can respond in either language: “One moment please, let me get you a bilingual salesperson.” or “Un instant s’il vous plaît.”
- Clearly identify service desks/counters where customers can be served in French and in English
- Always have at least one bilingual employee on the floor
- Broadcast bilingual messages — and why not French and English music! — on the public address system
- Offer bilingual greetings and options through your automated telephone system
- Ask your clients for feedback on the quality of your bilingual service

For more information or to benefit from a service, please contact the Business Assistance Program team:

T: 613-744-3037

F: 613-744-3572

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Referral to another employee and transfer of calls

1. Keep a list of bilingual employees close at hand
2. Inform your client you are referring him/her to a colleague who can speak with him/her in French or English
3. Inform your colleague of the client's preferred language

Communications materials

- Offer bilingual promotional materials: flyers, catalogues, menus, receipts, website, product labelling, billboards and advertising, business cards, etc.
- Use bilingual signage inside and outside your business and on your company vehicles
- Offer reading materials in both English and French in your reception area and waiting rooms
- Provide bilingual information in the Yellow Pages, and ensure your listing is included in the French and English sections of the phone book
- Make your company's website available in both official languages

Portions of the information above were graciously made available by Canadian Heritage and the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada.

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Useful resources

“Making Your Organization Bilingual — A guide and practical tools” at www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/guide/. Canadian Heritage has created a site offering a host of tools and strategies for organizations.

“Official Languages: A Matter of Service.” Video produced in 2000 by the Official Languages Division of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat in partnership with other organizations, available at: www.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/ollo/tools-outils/pg/versions/lm-md_e.pdf.