

ENGAGING FRANCOPHONE CUSTOMERS

What if no one on our staff speaks French?

Business owners should endeavor to have at least one staff member who can carry on a conversation with a Francophone customer. If this is not possible, apologize to the customer for the inconvenience and try your best to communicate with that person. There are many ways to overcome a language barrier while still maintaining great customer service.

What should staff do if there is a language barrier?

Avoid using any lingo, slang or jargon. Do not assume your communications with someone with limited English-speaking abilities has been understood. The most important factor in dealing with language barrier customers is to be patient and to respect their attempts to communicate (either by attempting to speak English or communicating through other means, such as gesturing). A thoughtful employee can make all the difference in helping prevent feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment when a person cannot express him or herself clearly or fully.

Should our business have information available in French and English?

Of course, having information available in both languages is ideal. However, for many business owners, this is simply not financially feasible. Being able to provide bilingual verbal and/or written materials is likely to provide a more satisfying experience for your customers. If bilingual service is available only in verbal form, consider letting your customers know: add visual signage to your business, such as "*Ici, on parle en français*". Another way to make your business reach a wider market is to advertise in both official languages.

What is the proper way to answer a telephone?

If you are bilingual, you should answer the phone in such a way that the customer knows you can speak in both French and English. For example, a bilingual greeting, such as "National Service Centre, Bonjour" will enable the customer to immediately speak to you in whichever language he or she prefers.

What is the proper term to describe the person?

Francophone

What is the difference between "tu" and "vous"?

Think about who you want to say "you" to.

Is there more than one person?

- YES: Use "vous".

Do you want to show respect for the person?

- YES: Use "vous".

Is the person a stranger and older than you?

- YES: Use "vous".

Are you worried about offending the person?

- YES: Use "vous".

When in doubt, use "vous". When speaking to a child, use "tu".

Do all Francophone people speak in the same way?

There are many different Francophone dialects. For example, someone from Quebec will speak a different variation of French than someone from Ontario and someone from France. They will have different pronunciations, phrases and slang.

What is the Francophone population breakdown?

Total population in Timmins: 42,997
Total Francophone population in Timmins: 16,495
This represents 38% of the Timmins population.

Total population in Cochrane District: 82,503
Total Francophone population in Cochrane District: 39,780
This represents 47% of the Cochrane District population.

Total population in Ontario: 12,160,282
Total Francophone population in Ontario: 485,630
This represents 4% of the Ontario population.

***Statistics based on 2006 Census.*

What are some Francophone holidays celebrated in Canada, and why should I be aware?

Saint Jean-Baptiste Day (June 24)
La Sainte Catherine Day (November 25)
Carnaval (February)

Francophone holidays present an opportunity for Ontarians to learn more about the culture and history of Francophone people in Ontario and to celebrate their traditions in a welcoming way into the community.

Here are some easy-to-learn phrases that are well worth knowing:

Hello	Bonjour, Salut
Goodbye	Au revoir, Salut
Have a good day	Bonne journée
How are you?	Comment ça va?
Can I help you?	Est-ce que je peux vous aider?
Your total is...	Votre total est...
Merry Christmas	Joyeux Noël
Happy New Year	Bonne Année
Thank You	Merci
You're Welcome	Bienvenue

The Timmins Chamber of Commerce's Community Outreach Committee has produced this information sheet to be shared with our businesses and their staff. This sheet serves to answer general questions and is not intended to be legal advice.

Sources include: Government of Canada, Government of Ontario, and Statistics Canada. Should you have questions or suggestions regarding the information contained on this sheet, please visit www.timminschamber.on.ca or contact the Chamber office at 360-1900.