

AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

CASE STUDIES

I would tell other business owners that you have to remember that you are running a retail store because you want to sell things. To choose to omit a segment of valuable customers is ludicrous.

Karin Torres, owner Corkscrew Wines
Brooklyn

Tasmania

Tasmania has a lot of businesses that already do a great job in supporting their community and older people. Below are some examples that COTA Tasmania has heard. Sometimes, it's just the little things that can mean making someone's day or making them feel small and insignificant.

Woolworths (Eastlands)

An 87 year old woman arrives at Woolworths and staff immediately help to swap her walker for a trolley. They park her walker by the service desk as she completes her shopping. Once she has returned to the cashiers, the staff swap her walker and trolley back, and walk her shopping to her car, helping her to load it in. Once everything is loaded in, they even place her walker in the car.

Capri (Launceston)

After being ignored and scoffed while shopping for a new bra in another store, an older woman visited Capri where sales assistants helped her to find and fit the perfect bra. She ended up leaving the shop not only with the bra that she required, but after feeling confident enough to ask, ordered several other items as well.

Vet Clinic (North Hobart)

A young receptionist helped an older woman carry out two large bags of cat food, without drawing attention to the fact that the older woman may struggle and cause embarrassment. The younger woman simply asked politely and in a conversational way if she could carry the larger items and asked the older woman for help by opening the door — making the experience a team effort.

Basket & Green café (Hobart)

An older gentleman with limited English, who is clearly in the throes of dementia, regularly visits Basket and Green. While he is sometimes happy, he is usually a little surly and confused. He often can't remember what type of coffee he drinks, behaves rudely to younger staff and asks for a menu that he cannot read. The staff at Basket and Green are friendly, respectful and courteous to this gentleman, gently reminding him of his preferred coffee and taking time to read him the menu until he makes a choice he is happy with. Younger staff are aware of his sensitivities and quickly (and discretely) hand him over to a more familiar face for service.

International

Corkscrew Wines Brooklyn (USA)

After seeing her mother begin to struggle to shop as she got older, Corkscrew Wines owner, Karin Torres, started to see the benefit of adapting her shop to meet the needs of people with a range of abilities. After having a baby, she found the need for these changes even more personal. Karin explains how age-friendly business was a no-brainer for her, and how thinking about how to include older people has improved customer loyalty and the financial position of her business. Some of the features she has adopted include:

- Wide aisles to accommodate people in wheelchairs or with strollers.

- Placing products within easy reach, with popular items at the front of the store.
- A bench for people to sit on.
- Holding customer bags behind the counter as they shop.
- Sticker box to entertain children while parents/grandparents shop.
- A wheelchair accessible entryway.
- Offering to help people carry items to customer's cars or free home delivery for people who may have difficulty getting out of their home.
- Taking time to get to know customers and their preferences.
- Having a range of products from affordable to expensive.
- Respectful customer service, accommodating their needs and ensuring they are not made uncomfortable because of their abilities.

Small businesses have that personal interaction you can't get in a big box store or online and older adults appreciate that more because that is how the neighbourhood has been in the past and they want to support that.

Karin Torres, owner Corkscrew Wines Brooklyn

Lawson convenience store (Japan)

Lawson convenience stores recognised the growing market of older people and adapted some of its stores, particularly those in rural areas, to cater to this demographic, with impressive results.

This shift included:

- Wide aisles to accommodate people in wheelchairs.
- Lowering shelves to make products easier to reach.
- Enlarging font on price tags.
- Adding tables to allow people to linger in the shop.
- Wheelchair accessible toilets.
- Repainting stores to more neutral and warm tones.
- Stocking more products that cater to an older demographic and single people.
- Installing cane holders at the checkout counter.
- Installing automatic doors.

Because of the aging declining population, if we keep on doing business as usual, it's doubtful that we'll see an upturn in sales.

Kazuo Kimura, Spokesperson for Lawson

SuperValu supermarkets (Ireland)

Owners of SuperValu supermarkets have recognised the need to adapt their businesses to suit older customers and create a competitive edge over larger, online businesses. This has included:

- Ordering stock appropriate to older consumers.
- Training younger staff to interact and converse with older people.
- Selling single-portion groceries.
- Redeveloping stores to include seating areas with tables and coffee machines.
- Increasing the delivery van fleet to meet demand for home deliveries.

For local retailers to differentiate themselves from the larger multiples, they have to serve their community really well and their community is getting older.

Owen Clifford, Head of Bank of Ireland's Retail Convenience section