



**Applying an Age-Friendly
Lens to Business & Service**

Presented by...

The Town of Wasaga Beach

- & -

**Wasaga Beach Age-Friendly
Community Advisory Committee**

With funding from...





Module 2

Customer Service



Who are the older customers we introduced in module one?

If you want to develop age-friendly customer service you need to understand just who you are serving.

In this module

1

Stereotypes surrounding seniors and older adults

2

Considerations for your older adult customers

3

How to evaluate the quality of your interactions with older adults

4

Steps you can take to ensure a customer service approach that is respectful to customers of all ages and capabilities

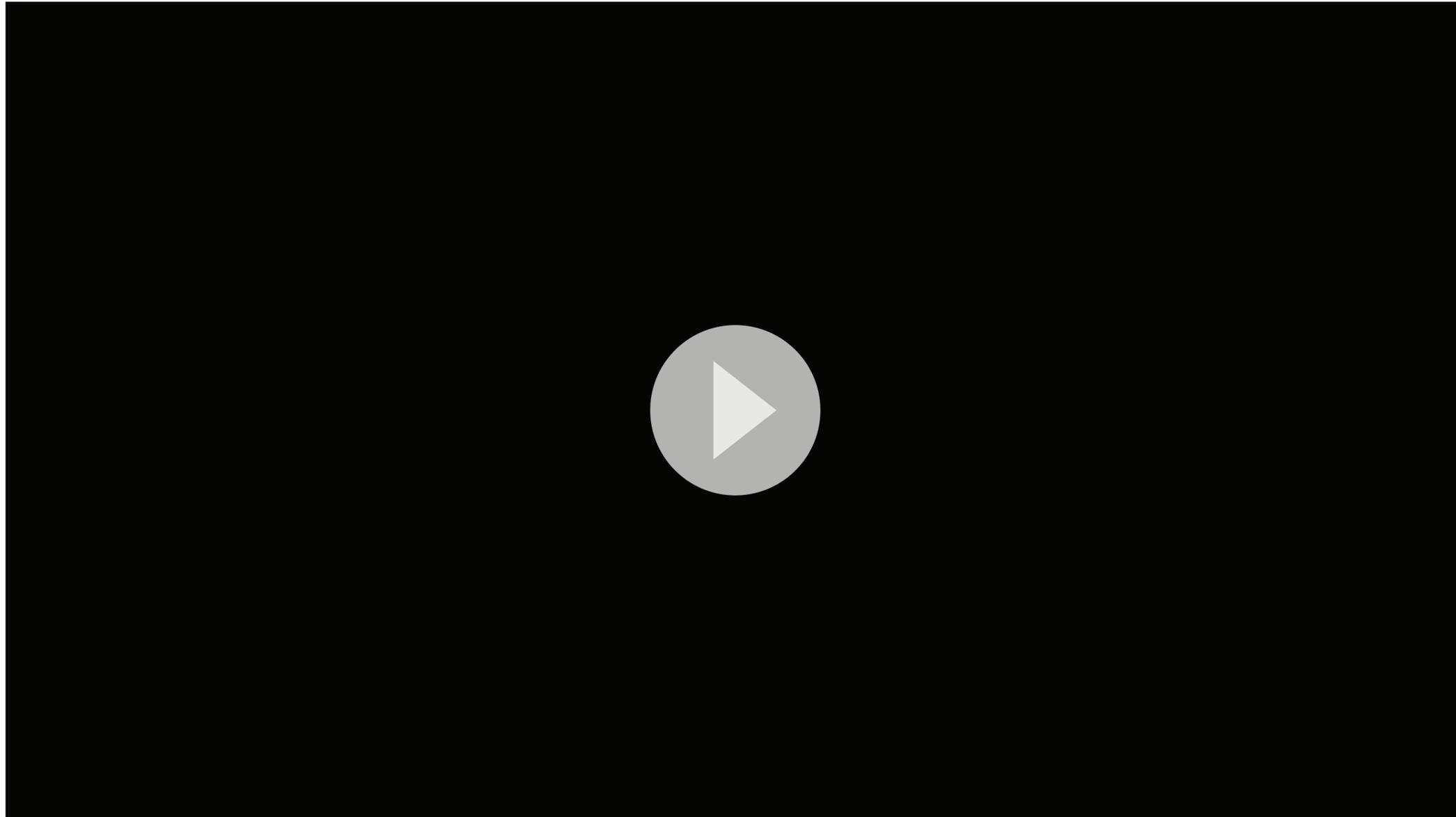
What do we think of when we hear senior, older adult, or elderly person?

Debunking negative stereotypes can help businesses and service organizations better serve older adults.

No two seniors are alike. Many disabilities can be invisible and many seniors are healthy and active and defy established stereotypes.



Seniors today are the new middle age...



Karina Barnes

There is no single definition of a senior. Senior often refers to someone who is 60 or older. But the age varies according to the source.

Many consider 65 a senior as this has been the most common age for retirement

However, some Government Senior Benefits can begin at 60; others at age 65

Some businesses offer discounts if you are 65, while at others you only have to be 55

**While age is just a number,
getting older can mean physical,
psychological and social changes.**

Seniors can be...

active, healthy and high functioning

or they can have...

health, mobility, visual, hearing or cognitive issues



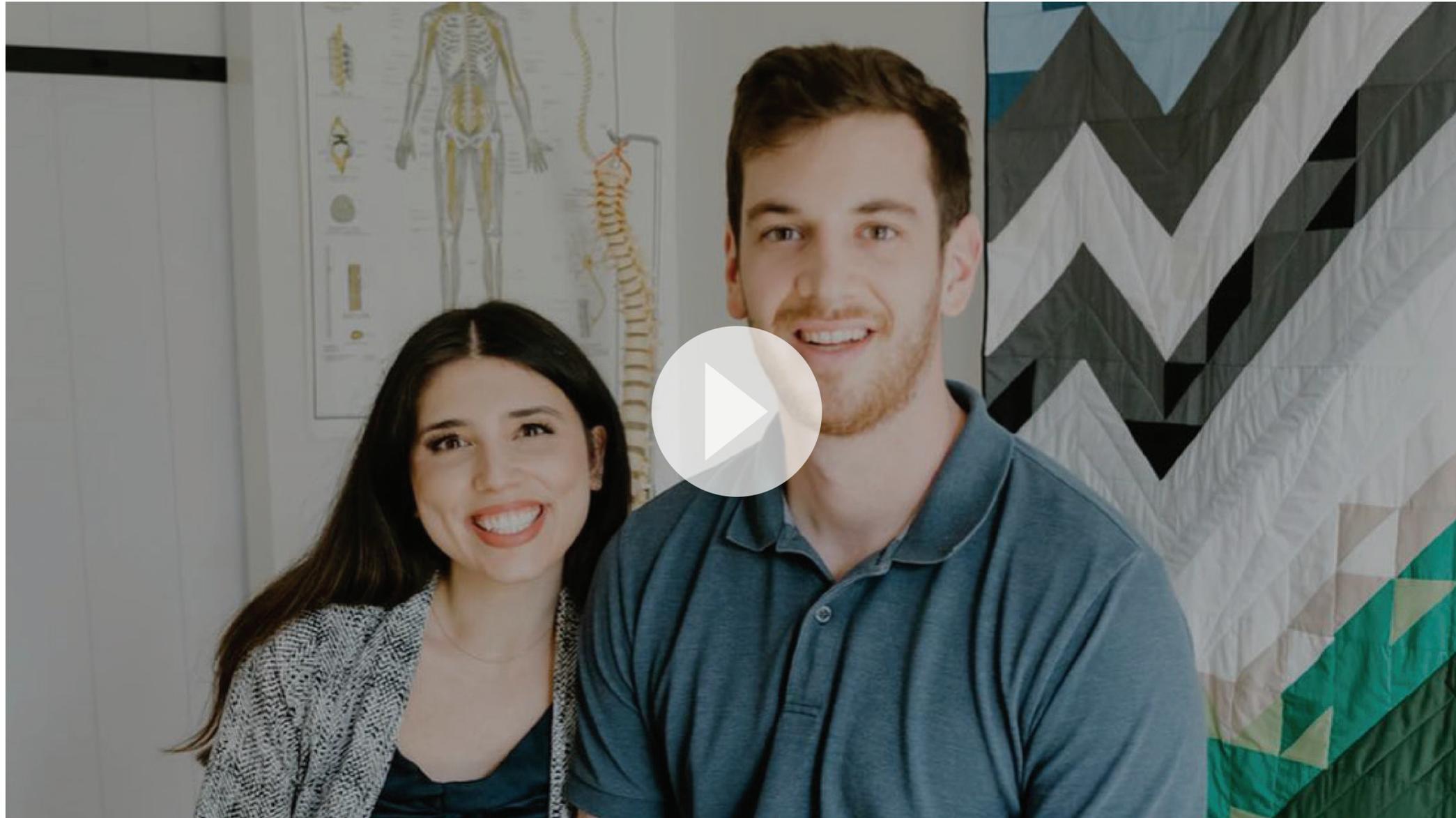


How the frontline worker communicates with an older customer is key.

Let's consider three principles of any good customer service practice and see how they relate to servicing seniors:

- Be **AWARE**
- Be **PATIENT**
- Be **RESPECTFUL, FRIENDLY** and **WELCOMING**

Georgian Family Chiropractic



Certified Age-Friendly Business

Be **AWARE**

Address your customer without stereotyping or drawing conclusions based on age or other characteristics.

Offer assistance based on the individual's needs;

- Are they using a walker?
- Do they need help carrying out items?
- Do they have trouble hearing?
- Do they need to sit or are they comfortable standing?

Pick up on cues from the customer. If in doubt always ask your customer what **THEY** need.

Be **PATIENT**

Seniors often have fewer opportunities for social interaction so shopping can be a social experience.

Factor in extra time and attention.

Take the time necessary to ensure the person understands what you are saying or asking. This may mean having to repeat yourself.

Move to a spot where you can comfortably serve someone with visual, or hearing difficulties.

Be **PATIENT**

...continued

If it's taking longer to reach a solution, or explain a situation, don't become frustrated. Continue to speak in a non-condescending tone and try explaining in a different way.

Listen to their stories. Seniors have years of experiences to share. Give them an opportunity to share them with you.

Be **RESPECTFUL, FRIENDLY** and **WELCOMING**

Seniors care about more than just products and services, it's also important how you deliver them.

Speak in a respectful manner. Avoid condescending behaviors like speaking too loudly, or treating them like a child with terms like "dear" "sweetie" or "buddy".

Handle any difficult situation (like an outburst of frustration) calmly and with respect.

Be RESPECTFUL, FRIENDLY and WELCOMING

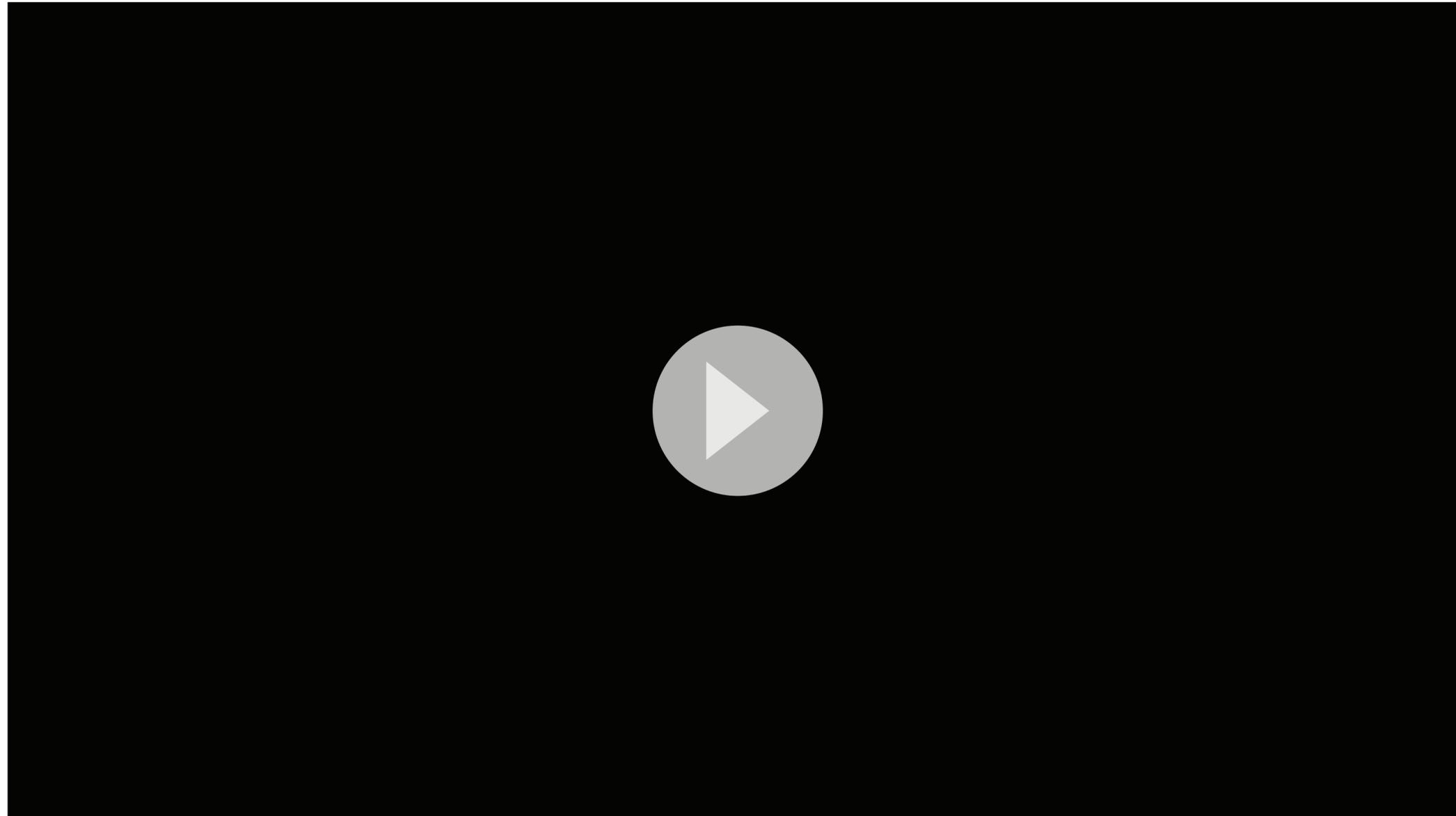
...continued

Be a friendly face. A smile and a “good morning” go a long way.

Be sure to make eye contact.

Seniors are loyal customers and become repeat customers where they experience good service.

It can be as simple as asking...



Karina Barnes & Deborah Hayward

The COVID pandemic made it even more difficult for seniors with hearing loss. If you are wearing a face mask or serving customers from behind a plexiglass partition, **here are a few things to keep in mind:**

Speak slowly and clearly while always making eye contact.

If it looks like the person you are talking to is having difficulty hearing you, raise your voice gradually. Avoid yelling.

Gesture with hands and utilize body language to add further prompts. Try pen and paper to assist when there is a communication breakdown.

Try to control the environment where you are speaking. Eliminate loud music or move to a quieter area.

First impressions are important...

- Is the desk, counter or reception area clearly visible?
- Is someone there to provide assistance or answer questions?
- Is the counter clear with space to put purchases, bags, etc.?
- Is there space for someone to rest a cane or other assistive device?
- Is there a place to sit if someone needs to?





First impressions...

...continued

- Are items at the counter placed within easy reach without too much bending or reaching?
- Do staff acknowledge or welcome customers as they enter? Are they clearly identifiable as staff?
- If staff work behind a plexiglass partition for COVID precautions, is it still easy for someone to talk to and see the person at the desk? Is the partition clean and free of signs/posters so both parties can see through easily? Is it easy for the customer to pay? Is there an alternative if the partition is posing as an obstacle?

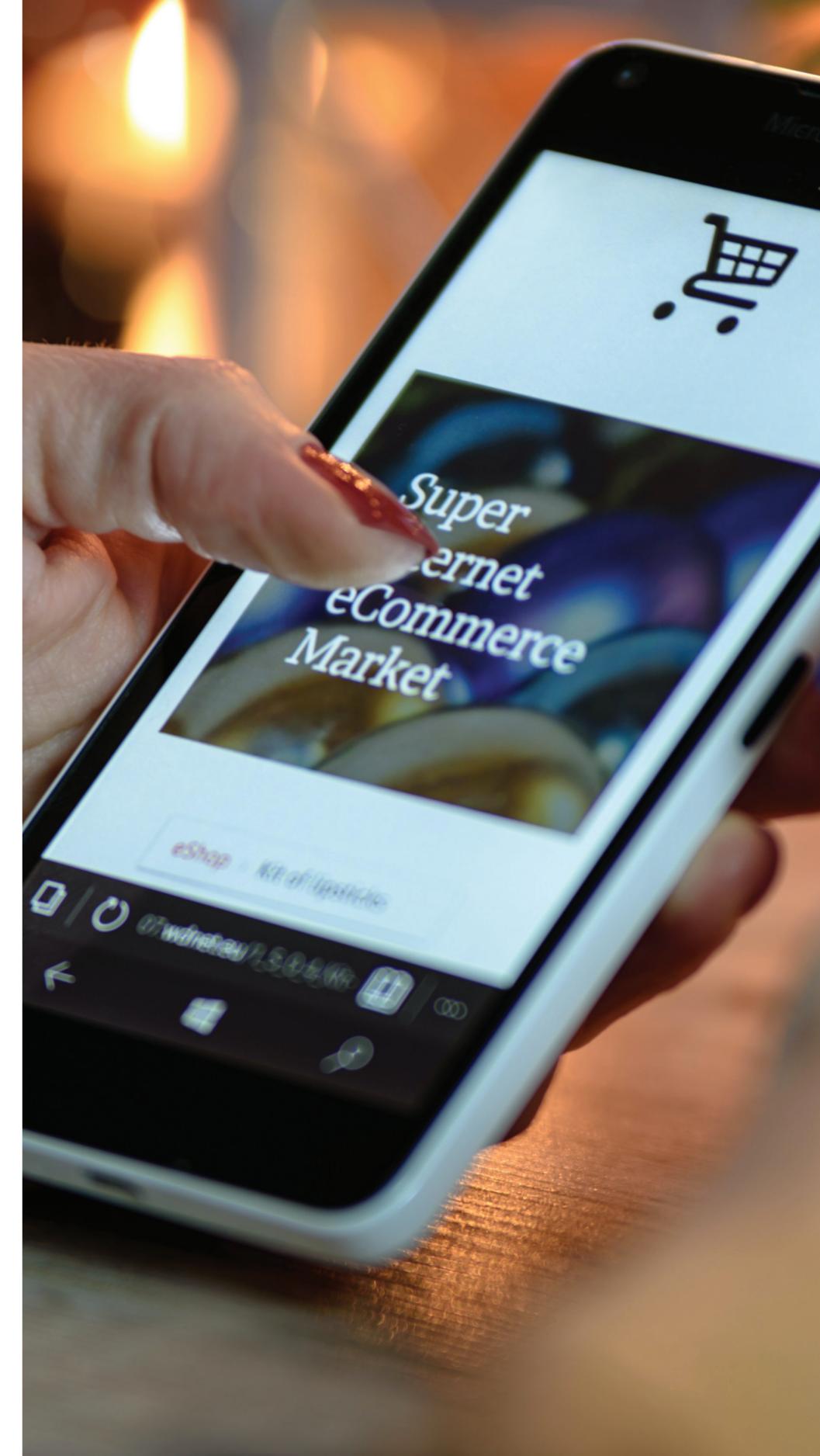
Online shopping is also an option for older adults. An effective way to cater to seniors is by making your website or online shopping platform easy to navigate.

- Make it clear where users can go to find help or reach out for more information. Include a clearly marked HELP button.
- Use simple, familiar words in short, straightforward sentences.
- Simplify forms; clearly label each form field and indicate when fields are filled in correctly.
- Use contrasting colors; black type on white or light background.

Website Accessibility

...continued

- Use plain, large fonts to help seniors easily read the information.
- Avoid distractions like flashing elements, pop-ups, auto-play video ads, or loud music.
- Provide an option to access material in other languages.
- If seniors and older adults are your target market, be sure to include them in promotions and visuals in a positive manner.
- Get feedback from your senior customers and clients on what works and what doesn't.



Building an Age-Friendly Simcoe County

Business/Organization Guide & Recognition Program



The good news about taking steps to be an age-friendly business is that it can be a low-cost venture.

Remember: if your business is comfortable, accessible, and welcoming for older adults it will be appealing to everyone.



Let's review this module:

- Seniors can have varying combinations of needs and requirements.
- Be aware, be patient, be respectful, friendly and welcoming.
- Assess your first points of customer contact and evaluate your customer service through the eyes of an older adult who may have a hearing, vision or mobility impairment.
- Keep your website and promotions simple to use, read and navigate.
- Assess your business using the County of Simcoe's Customer Service and Respect self-assessment checklist.

Coming up next...

Module 3

Comfort, Visibility
& Clarity