

WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS

Like any change, going smoke-free involves an adjustment period. In the end, customers don't quit eating and drinking at their favorite restaurants and bars just because they go smoke-free; they just quit smoking there.

Some former customers who were previously chased away by secondhand smoke will return. Some smokers may say they're never coming back, yet they almost always do. After a short transition, everything typically returns to normal.

Adhering to the few simple steps that follow will ensure the smoothest transition possible, and avoid unnecessarily offending customers who either favor or oppose the new smoke free environment that has been created.

Preparing the Property:

It may appear obvious, but preparing your worksite is one of the first steps in creating a smoke-free environment.



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alienated.*

- Remove all ashtrays, matchbooks and any other smoking paraphernalia that might tempt smokers to light up. Offer gum or mints as an alternative to smoking.
- Post no-smoking signs wherever possible, particularly in places where people tend to smoke: at entrances, on bulletin boards, in restrooms, in waiting areas etc. (Check what the law requires, as it often dictates where signs must be placed.) Prominently displaying no-smoking signs will make it obvious that the worksite is smoke-free and will eliminate any potential misunderstandings.
- If possible, set up an outside area (away from entrances and exits) where customers can go to smoke without affecting non-smokers. Make it as nice as possible – with benches, plants, ashtrays, litter receptacles etc; so that smokers do not feel exiled to the outside. One idea is to put the names of regular smoking customers on the ashtrays or benches outside. This makes them feel as if they have their own premier spot to smoke. Although many smokers themselves prefer smoke-free dining, you do not want to needlessly upset those remaining smokers. Smart planning will help you create an atmosphere where smokers do not feel alienated.
- Train your employees on what to say to customers who wish to smoke, and provide them with materials they can give to customers which explains the law.

(For a more complete review of how to train employees, please look in the Training Employees/Enforcement section of this handbook.)



Internal Communications:

Informing your customers about the new law and subsequent changes at your business is an important part of becoming smoke-free.

- Print requests that smokers not smoke in the workplace on small business cards, table tents, napkins, coasters and menus. These can be given to customers or left on dining tables.
- Place articles discussing secondhand smoke and the new law in customer newsletters.
- Some of your customers may find an informational meeting beneficial. If so, set a specific time to hold the meeting, in which you discuss the new law and changes in your business.
 - Provide refreshments like free appetizers or beverages and pass out information on secondhand smoke.
 - Let customers know that the smoke-free law is there to protect the health of the employees – not to get them to quit smoking.
 - Make sure that the general manager and owner are present in order to convey the importance of the meeting to customers and let them know that they are valued.
 - Be open to customer comments, but remind them that smoke-free environments are in accordance with local or state law.
 - Be positive and back the new law 100%. Restaurateurs and bar owners who do not support the new law or policy have a more difficult transition.



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*Make it fun!
Decorate the
workplace, hire
a DJ, or create a
new 'smoke-
free' drink!*

Also try these ideas:

- **Have a smoke-free party!**

Celebrate going smoke-free by creating a fun atmosphere in which customers can enjoy themselves and the new smoke-free environment. Decorate the workplace and consider live entertainment or a DJ.

Create a unique discounted smoke-free drink!

Serve a special entrée in honor of the event!

Have a party theme or slogan:

Cheers to smoke-free bars
Eat, drink and be smoke-free
Breathe stronger, party longer

Have a theme night to celebrate going smoke-free:

Smoke-free happy hour
Smoke-free wine night
Smoke-free Daily Countdown



Tips Offered by Bar and Restaurant Owners/Managers.

“Mostly the customer just wants someone to listen. We make it (being smoke-free) a positive thing by saying that it’s great, our establishment smells good, other customers aren’t bothered and they are welcome to light up outside.”

(Jim Kopp, owner/manager, The Rumpus, San Francisco)

“Once in a while, a customer will want to smoke a cigar at the bar, and we’ll have to walk outside with them to talk about why we’re smoke-free while they smoke their cigar. We just let them know that it’s the law, and there haven’t been any problems.”

(Sam Walker, owner, Whisky Creek & Angels, Mammoth Mountain – a popular winter sports region)

“My health and the health of my employees is simply better since the Smoke Free Air Act went into effect. The best part is that it has not hurt my business’ bottom line.”

(Pat Hughes, owner, Scruffy Duffy’s, New York City)

“Once in a blue moon, people ask to smoke. We let them know we are a nonsmoking sports bar and if they want to smoke, we have an outside area close to the exit.”

(Assad Gardizi, director of restaurants, Barley ‘N Hops Sports Bar, San Francisco)

“Smokers just go outside and we sweep up in the morning. They still come to my bar or there wouldn’t be cigarette butts out there.”

(Harold Baum, owner, Clement Street Bar & Grill, San Francisco)

“I had regulars come to me and say they would never be back. And I said I was sorry to hear that. But, they all have, luckily [come back].”

(Kathy Davis, Manager, Tides Tavern, Gig Harbor, Washington)

The Adjustment Period:

An adjustment period varies city-to-city and state-to-state. Evidence has shown that restaurant customers adjust quicker – a few weeks, whereas bar customers may take somewhat longer.

Most importantly, the length of the adjustment period is almost always reflected by management's support (shorter adjustment) or lack of support (longer adjustment) of the new law.

