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Building Access

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Accessible customer service training

As part of ORC's ongoing efforts to comply with the requirements of the Accessible Customer Service Standard under Ontario Regulation 429/07, new ORC employees took part in Accessible Customer Service Training sessions offered in November 2010 and March 2011. Each session taught participants how to understand the needs of customers with disabilities. The training made a significant impression on staff, as it enhanced their awareness of what it might be like to have one or more disabilities. One participant commented that "I found the training to be extremely educational and eye opening....I would recommend this session to everyone".

To date, 433 ORC staff members have received Accessible Customer Service Training. For more information or to sign up for a future session, please contact Jordan Erasmus at: Jordan.Erasmus@ontariorealty.ca.

Making accessible content in Word 2007

In March 2011, 34 ORC employees took part in a training session where they learned the ins and outs of making content accessible using MS Word 2007. Just a few simple steps will help people who are blind, have low-vision, have learning disabilities, or have upper-body mobility impairments, access the information contained in your document; whether it is a complex report or a simple memo. Structuring your document properly is particularly important for people who rely on a screen reader device (such as JAWS and ZoomText) to interpret text. Following these steps also benefits the writer, as it results in a more intelligible document that is easier to revise and repurpose (e.g. convert to HTML). Tips for improving the accessibility of your content include:

- Using styles (i.e. headings) to structure your document
- Providing alternative (descriptive) text for graphics
- Choosing colour combinations that result in contrast between foreground fonts and shaded backgrounds
- Inserting page and section breaks, rather than blank lines
- Using the columns or table features to create structured columns, rather than tabs and spaces

If you are interested in getting a copy of the training handbook, or wish to attend potential future training sessions, please contact Jordan Erasmus at Jordan.Erasmus@ontariorealty.ca.

For a text version of this newsletter please click here.
Alternative formats can be made available upon request.



Signage and wayfinding focus groups

(Contributed by Hodan Egeh – ORC Professional Services)

As part of its on-going consultation efforts to understand and identify best practices related to accessible design, ORC held several signage and wayfinding focus groups during the month of March. The findings of this work will be incorporated into a best practices document that ORC is developing for signage and wayfinding.

Methodology

A total of 20 individuals participated in three focus group sessions. A cross-disability perspective was used when forming the focus groups – it was important to have a mix of differently-abled individuals to obtain a variety of ideas and perspectives on the existing signage on the main floor of ORC's head office in Toronto. One focus group was made up of entirely ORC employees working on the floor, while the other focus groups contained individuals outside ORC, which included:

- AccessAbility Advantage
- CNIB
- ServiceOntario
- Ministry of Government Services (OPS Diversity Office)
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Community Services I&IT Cluster
- Ryerson University

Groups were broken into pairs and assigned various wayfinding routes on the floor. These routes were considered the most frequent and heavily-used paths that individuals would likely take when navigating through the office space, with routes typically starting at the elevator lobby, reception or a boardroom and ending at key destination points, such as the washrooms, serveries and emergency exits.

Key findings

After completing each route, focus group participants were asked to fill out a survey regarding their experiences when finding their way through the office space using the existing signage. At the end of each focus group session, a 20 minute discussion period took place that allowed focus group participants to answer some general questions on wayfinding and signage.

ORC's Accessibility Team would like to thank everyone who participated in the focus group sessions. We appreciate the feedback that was received by all participants.

We look forward to hearing your questions and comments.
Please contact us at: accessibility@ontariorealty.ca

Sincerely,
Accessibility Team, Ontario Realty Corporation