

By the time you read this, 4 of the 6 weeks of the prescribed confinement will have elapsed. You see my wife chose to have bunion surgery to correct a foot that has been causing her problems for years. The surgery went just fine and Dr. Trout did a fantastic job. But with the surgery she has to wear a cast from her toes to her knee for 6 weeks. Did I mention that she is not allowed to put any weight on the cast? That is making her recovery, and trying to function as normal as possible even more interesting.

The first week she was home was by far the most interesting and the most work for the rest of the family. Personally I thought I knew how much work Joanne did around the house, but I was wrong, really wrong. During the first couple of days she was on pain medication that worked very well, and occasionally it was fun to watch and listen to the drug induced actions. But with Joanne incapacitated from the surgery, cast and drugs, I quickly experienced the difficulty of being a single parent. My respect for those in that role has increased dramatically.

Joanne was able to function much better in the weeks that followed and we have gotten into a routine that seemed to work for everyone. She has borrowed a walker from a friend and is able to hop around the house with no help. The walker doesn't need to be propped up and is in general less cumbersome. In addition we have strategically placed chairs around so that she can balance on her knee while she is getting ready in the morning or at the kitchen sink. She looks a little like a flamingo!

If we go out of the house, we have to allow a lot of extra time for getting in and out of the car and the destination. Grocery shopping has become a different experience with me pushing Joanne around in a modified wheelchair/grocery cart at Fairway and her driving a motorized cart around Hy-Vee. As a taller than average person, I have also learned to see the world from a different level, and to take direction.

All this wheelchair, crutches and walker got me to thinking about others who are permanently living with a disability. As owners and managers of small businesses we are subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA. Since I don't know very much about the act, other than door handles have to be levers instead of knobs and toilets have to be made differently, I decided to look up the act on the internet. I was blown away by the amount of information. Just the frequently asked questions section was 32 pages long!

Unfortunately I did not have time to read through the legislation. What I can tell you is that we need to make our businesses accessible for our customers and employees who see the world from a different level. Not just because it is the law, but because it is simply good business. If we can accommodate the people who need something just a little bit different without disrupting or hampering the majority of our client base, it is a no brainer.

Look around your workplace this week and see how accommodating you really are and make the small changes necessary. People with disabilities will reward you by doing more business with your company. More business means more profits and that is a situation where everyone wins.

The week before Thanksgiving Joanne will get her cast removed and with any luck things will be back to "normal" around the Friedman house. I will try and be more helpful and definitely more considerate of those who get around differently than I do.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny. You can view past columns at [www.fnbames.com](http://www.fnbames.com), under the "small business today" button on the right side of the screen.*