

IHSA's small business

awareness initiative

Over the past year, IHSA has been engaging with firms through a number of channels to raise awareness of the different products and services we offer to the construction industry. Knowing how important it was to meet our clients face-to-face, IHSA decided one of the best places to do so was where they started their daily activities. So IHSA teamed up with Home Depot by using its locations as places where we could reach out and interact with the construction industry.

Beginning in June 2016, a team of outreach associates visited 15 Home Depot locations throughout the Greater Toronto Area to gather data on businesses that have or have not heard of the services IHSA offers. Many of the more than 700 businesses surveyed at Home Depot were small or medium-sized. Almost 45% of them had only two to five employees. Small businesses are some of the most vulnerable in the industry when it comes to health and safety awareness. So this was a great opportunity to reach them.

According to Ken Rayner, IHSA's Vice President of Customer Relations, Market Development, and Labour Relations:

The data and feedback collected during the summer of 2016 encouraged IHSA to expand this initiative, both from a location and duration perspective.

It was clear that many of the construction personnel with whom we engaged at Home Depot demonstrated a willingness to discuss health and safety and take away information and products. It appeared for many to be an opportunity to address a gap of knowledge within an environment (Home Depot) they frequented often and felt comfortable in.



Visitors to the booth at Home Depot were given an IHSA bag filled with health and safety resources

From this outreach it was found that 81% of these businesses did not know about IHSA and its services. As a result of those findings, IHSA put a team together to tackle this situation and get small businesses more involved in our association. That was the birth of the small business initiative, which began by conducting a pilot project to gain more insight into the issue. It was found that 116,781 of IHSA's firms had fewer than 20 employees. And out of a sample of 1,000, almost half were not found in our system—meaning they had never used our services.

These activities and initiatives proved that our initial thoughts and analyses, were correct; in other words, better engagement was needed to help small businesses achieve their health and safety objectives.

A group of customer service representatives began contacting hundreds of small business clients. This engagement helped the client understand our products and services better and gave them easy access to information that they didn't know was available to them before.

As IHSA customer service representative Anika Mattrasingh explained:

A lot of clients have never heard about us or didn't know of the services we offered. Once we gave them an overview and described our services to them, they were extremely interested in how they could better understand health and safety and how to incorporate it more into their daily proceedings.

Clients I had spoken with had some sort of health and safety established within their business, but they loved how many free courses and products we offered and how easy it was to sign up or order products right through our website—but most of them signed up and ordered right over the phone!

IHSA has been able to reach out and have positive engagement not only with our small business clients but also with firms that had never heard of IHSA. We will continue our efforts throughout 2018. Feel free to give our customer service team a call at 1-800-263-5024 or visit our website ihsa.ca/smallbusiness to find free information. You can also visit the small business section of our website to find out how to best prepare your business to be safe.