

Opening Doors For Those With Disabilities

(NAPSA)—There could be good news for the more than 54 million men, women and children with disabilities in America. Many American firms are finding ways to help them so they don't have to struggle to find drugstores, health care facilities, education facilities, hotels, restaurants and shopping outlets that are easily accessible.

With many baby boomers now entering their 60s and having a rise in health- and mobility-related problems, there will likely be a sharp increase in the number of Americans who will seek to spend their money only at places that offer assistance for their mobility needs. In addition, a positive customer experience will play a major role in capturing the millions of dollars being spent by this growing baby boomer market.

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, was passed to protect individuals with disabilities and guarantee them equal access to all facilities. Over 15 years later, many people with disabilities are wondering why so many places they want to go to are not accessible to them.

To help businesses become ADA compliant, Ingersoll Rand's Security Technologies Sector created a strategic business unit for automated openings. Ron Ratell, the unit's manager and ADA marketing manager, believes the problem stems from a lack of awareness.

"Many small- and medium-sized-business owners are often unaware that their facility is not in compliance with ADA guidelines," said Ratell, whose company specializes in automated openings and also owns the Schlage™ brand of commercial and residential locks, which are the most widely



used locks for homes and apartments in the U.S.

"More times than not, a business owner only becomes aware of noncompliance following an accident or complaint by a person with a disability. This reactive approach requires business owners to devote unnecessary time and money defending themselves and their business, while the building's openings remain noncompliant with ADA guidelines," added Ratell.

"Another problem that exists is that many business owners do not know who to turn to for help on ADA accessibility issues or that there are tax incentives that are available to help their operations become updated to the necessary standards," Ratell said.

Currently, there are two major tax incentives programs available to businesses to help cover the cost of making access improvements required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The first is a tax credit that can be used for architectural adaptations, equipment acquisitions and services. The second is a tax deduction that can be used for architectural or trans-

portation adaptations. Information on these ADA Tax Incentives can be found at www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/taxpack.htm.

Ratell's company also offers business owners a wide range of consulting services and turnkey solutions to help business owners make their facilities ADA accessible. The Automated Openings Business Unit of Ingersoll Rand provides solutions for all types of openings that are required to be accessible. These solutions range from door handle levers, door push/pulls, mechanical door closers and mechanical exits to powered door operators. Powered door operators can range from push-n-go (assist pedestrian in opening the door) to completely automatic opening and closing.

Knowledge of the opening usage, fire and life safety codes, and ADA accessibility requirements is critical to provide the right solution for your particular openings. Optimized solutions are provided to bridge the gap between the owner's business objectives and ADA accessibility.

For business owners or individuals who have questions regarding ADA accessibility, Ratell recommends these organizations as valuable go-to sources: the Americans with Disabilities Act Home Page (www.ada.gov), National Organization on Disability (www.nod.org) and the United States Access Board (www.access-board.gov).

To find a security technologies consultant, go to www.irsecuritytechnologies.com/ssc_locate.asp.

• *Ron Ratell is an expert on regulations relevant to the Americans with Disabilities Act and can be reached at (317) 805-5704 or via e-mail at ron_ratell@irco.com.*