

## Barclays: a beacon that alerts employees to the needs of their customer

Launched as a pilot scheme at the tail end of 2014, the Beacon project uses the latest technology to help Barclays' customers with their accessibility needs. Thanks to a tiny beacon transmitter installed in banks, employees are alerted when the customer enters the branch and know what type of service is required.

To use the service, customers with a disability or impairment enter their requirements into a free-to-download mobile app, along with their name and photo. Barclays consulted with both customers and disability charities during the design of the scheme, which gives customers complete control over the information transmitted. This includes, for example, details of their disability and the help they would like to receive in a branch. All information is securely stored in the app.

Disabled customers were fully involved in testing and then using the service. "It will help remove the initial barrier to communication that some people find difficult. You won't need to ask for help or explain your needs," said one customer who participated in the pilot.

"With beacon technology, branch employees have all their details to hand so it makes the experience much better, not only for the customers but for employees as well, as they feel confident that they know how to support all our customers," said the bank.

The Beacon project is revolutionary, argues Barclays. In particular, it helps customers with non-visible disabilities whose needs are less obvious. It also allows customers to call the shots – if they do not require assistance on a particular day, they can press a button to say so.

In parallel to deploying the beacon technology, employees received extra disability awareness and accessibility training, so that customer requests are managed knowledgeably and confidently.

Barclays expanded the original pilot scheme to a total of 25 sites across the UK; however, problems with the technology have led to the Beacon project being put on hold. The bank is currently ironing out these technical problems and looking to run the project in more locations.

## What Barclays learned from the Beacon project

- Working with charity partners is critical in finding local disabled people to test the technology in branches
- Involve disabled people throughout the process and act on their feedback to ensure the technology is truly accessible – their direct experience is vital
- Engage experts from the start of the design phase of the project

# Learning directly from disabled people: A toolkit for global business

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