

Top 10 Ways to Engage Your Hispanic Audience



1. If you have the resources, provide services in their preferred language.

It tends to be very difficult for Hispanic people to find services provided in their preferred language. Often, they are forced to rely on their children for translation and may leave confused, not really understanding the content or procedures. Having someone who can speak to them in their language will make them feel empowered and enthusiastic, and they will be more likely to return and recommend your services.

2. Learn some basic welcome phrases in Spanish!

Hispanic people love to hear people trying to speak Spanish. They will appreciate your effort, and this will make them feel special and cared for. Try saying things like “Bienvenidos” (Welcome), “Hola, como estan?” (Hello, how are you?), “Buenas tardes” (Good afternoon), “Buenos días” (Good morning), “Gracias” (Thank you), or “Adios” (Goodbye). Taking the time to learn these phrases lets people know how important they are to your organization.

3. Make information and activities family-friendly.

Hispanic people tend to be very family-oriented and enjoy activities where the whole family can be involved. Similarly, when developing educational materials, it may be useful to target them to the whole family as a unit. Try using family-friendly titles such as “Ways to be active with your children,” “Healthy recipes your children will love,” or “Una familia saludable” (A healthy family).

4. Use pictures!

When you perceive that language may be a barrier, pictures and other visuals are outstanding tools; they will make the teaching materials more understandable and will keep your audience engaged. The use of culturally relevant pictures is important. For example, when talking about healthy foods, your audience will be more interested if the pictures represent dishes that



Extension agents have an opportunity to extend knowledge to many communities, including Hispanic audiences. Agent Kim Gowdy (left) is pictured here with two clients from Harrison County.

are familiar to them. Similarly, if you are talking about a healthy family, a picture of a traditional Hispanic family will be attractive to this audience.

5. Loosen up!

Do not overly concern yourself with being extremely professional or politically correct; this population will greatly appreciate the warmth of a genuine adviser. Hispanic people tend to be very affectionate and may want to hug you or ask questions about your family. If this happens, do not feel uncomfortable or offended; it is part of their culture.

6. Reassure that their personal information will not be shared.

If citizenship status is an issue, individuals tend to be a little reserved about personal information such as name, address, or telephone number. They may even feel uncomfortable in agencies that are believed to work in collaboration with the government. This does not mean that they are bad people or are up to no good. Reassure them that their information will not be shared, and try to make them feel safe and secure; this will allow them to open up and participate.

7. Understand that all Hispanic cultures are not the same.

Hispanic cultures share the same language and some traditions. However, every Hispanic country is unique and has different traditions, customs, beliefs, and gastronomy. Generalizing all Hispanics as the same or as Mexicans is a critical mistake.

8. Understand the degree of acculturation.

The time the family or individual has been in the United States creates cultural differences. A family who has just recently moved to the U.S. will seek a more traditional service and may require a more in-depth orientation. On the other hand, a second-generation Hispanic American will probably prefer to be spoken to in English and may prefer a more Americanized service.

9. Be aware of your own bias.

Taking a moment to understand your own biases toward Hispanic people will allow you the opportunity to correct them. Treat your new Hispanic clients as a blank page. Like in any other race, every individual is unique. Do not assume lower socioeconomic or educational level. Get to know them, and plan education materials or interventions accordingly.

10. Give affirmations.

Hispanic families or individuals face many barriers and disadvantages in this country, including language, discrimination, harsh working conditions, isolation, and many others. Acknowledging these clients' strength and bravery in the face of their everyday difficulties will build their confidence and make them feel respected and appreciated.



A graduation ceremony following an Extension program can give participants a sense of accomplishment and build their confidence.

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