

How Your Small Business Can Benefit From the Shop Local Movement

Shop Local Movement Drives Customer Traffic

Surveying more than 3,000 independent businesses from all 50 states, the 2015 Independent Business Survey found that independent businesses located in cities with active Local First campaigns are outperforming those in cities without such campaigns.

Outperforming. What exactly does that mean? By the numbers, reported in the 2015 Independent Business Survey it means that:

- Businesses in places with an active Local First initiative reported an average sales increase of 9.3% in 2014, which is nearly double that of their counterparts in communities without a Local First initiative.
- Retailers in these cities reported higher average sales gains at 5.7% compared to 4.2% reported by retailers in other cities.

Among survey respondents in cities with a Local First initiative, 69% of business owners reported that the initiative had a positive impact on their business.

More than half of the businesses who reported that the Local First initiative in their community had a positive impact rated that impact as either moderately or significantly positive. **The key factor amongst those who reported a moderate or significant impact of the Local First movement on their business? Heavy marketing of their active participation in their community's "buy local" campaign.**

Repeatedly reported positive impacts of Local First initiatives include:

- New customers (according to 51% of businesses)
- Improved loyalty of existing customers (according to 49% of businesses)
- Increased local media coverage of independent businesses (according to 54% of businesses)
- Increased awareness & support of city officials for the local business community (according to 45% of businesses)
- Increased overall traffic in local business districts (according to 22% of businesses)
- Led to more collaborative environments, mutual support and increased purchasing habits between local businesses (according to 46% of businesses)

Locally owned, independent business in communities with active Local First movements outperform their counterparts because a vibrant, impactful “buy local” campaigns influence consumer behavior and drive customer traffic.

Join us in this powerful movement by taking these steps:

1. Join our local Shop Hamilton campaign.
2. Promote your own business as part of the community. Instead of seeking credibility by trying to seem like a larger corporation, focus on the things that your small business can do better because you are part of the local community.
3. Put yourself out there. Don't be an invisible owner; people feel good about supporting members of their own community. Let them know who you are and what your business means to you. They can feel good about frequenting your business because they feel like they know you. Being present can also keep employees on track and committed to providing great service at all times.
4. Include local references in your advertising. Even a single line such as “Serving our community for the past X number of years” can gain you local goodwill. Sponsor local sports teams, create promotions that tie in with local events, and be actively present in the community. If there is a festival, parade, or other event sure to draw local crowds try to have a presence. Can't afford giveaway items or coupons for freebies? Just having your name included in event signage or having people walking around the event wearing your logo on their t-shirt can be a marketing boost.

By the way, are local businesses just businesses that have a storefront? Can you still benefit from the shop local movement if you don't have a physical store? The answer is a resounding “YES!” As long as you get your brand – and yourself – out there, and participate in the shop local movement, you can see results.

Statistics are from A February 11, 2015 study by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance