

Small Business Appreciation GUIDE



Shopping for Gifts

When you invest in small businesses, you are also supporting the local community you have come to know and love so much.

Spending money with your favorite local establishments for holiday or birthday gifts helps increase their revenue throughout the year. Many companies offer unique ways to shop and share their innovative products and services to everyone on your list.

This year, supporting your local small business is more important than ever. After most states required non-essential companies to shutter due to COVID-19 restrictions, those that withstood the lockdowns are focused on rebounding. Here are some ideas to help refuel the economy for businesses in need of support.

BUY GIFT CARDS

For the person who has everything, gift cards are often an easy option for a present. The certificates are helpful to businesses as they can invite new customers and use their expertise and products to retain them as regulars. If you're buying for someone out of town, make sure the company offers online shopping and shipping.

In-town recipients mean more flexibility as you can



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choose from a local restaurant, hobby shop or independent niche store. Before purchasing a gift card, ensure the business is open and has specific safety measures in place.

CONSIDER SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS

Find out if local vendors offer subscription boxes filled

with a variety of products each month.

Some businesses provide samples of their newest line-ups, whether it be food products, coffee flavors or apparel. They benefit by receiving a reliable stream of revenue that helps them plan for upcoming expenses. As the gift-giver of these recurring boxes, you'll be

giving a present that lasts long all year. And it's a great way to help your local small business grow, because they'll be able to introduce new products to subscription customers who already love their offerings.

ORDER IN ADVANCE

Since small businesses typically operate with just enough

employees to do the job, be courteous by placing your order in advance. Pre-planning helps you avoid rushing with last-minute shopping and allowing time to resolve issues that may come up while waiting for delivery or pickup. Be patient when problems do arise and work together to settle them respectfully.

Private Gym Membership

Independently owned gyms provide a plethora of benefits over commercially owned chain facilities.

One of the most significant advantages is the at-home feeling offered by trainers and other members.

Working out with like-minded peers and professionals can help take your training to the next level. Improve your health and fitness by signing up for a membership at a private gym and support the owners who likely live in the same community.

Trainers at smaller facilities may also offer more thorough workouts and custom fitness plans. When scheduling an appointment with an expert, be honest about your strength and conditioning or weight loss goals. Through hard work and the knowledge of a professional, your commitment to support a local gym can improve your overall well-being.

PRIVATE LESSONS

A benefit of working out at a familiar gym is the camaraderie you build with employees and personal trainers. Purchasing private lessons from a fitness expert you already have a relationship with can lead to a more comfortable experience. One-on-



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one time is an excellent way for an expert to identify problem areas with your exercise routine and adjust them accordingly.

While sticking to a physical regimen is essential, ensuring that you perform the moves correctly will provide the best results. Taking private lessons will allow you to learn new

exercises and correct methods at a more relaxed pace.

BUY MERCHANDISE

Try to support your local gym by purchasing their gear. Most facilities offer exercise clothing or apparel that advertises their services. Not only will you have fresh equipment to show off your

fitness progress, but you can also spread awareness of the facility. Besides buying clothes, ask about workout formulas, shaker bottles and supplements that they recommend or offer.

SIGN UP FOR CLASSES

Challenge yourself by signing up for classes for physical

activities that you haven't attempted.

Working with a group of peers can help you gain confidence in your abilities and learn about new physical passions.

Ask your gym officials about available lessons or check their websites for a list of dates, times and options.

Start a Shop Local Challenge

Across the country, Americans join shop local challenges to support their community's economy and show gratitude to small business owners.

When committing to the cause, be vocal about your intentions with your close friends and family and share the idea on social media. Get your followers and peers on board to create a significant boost in local business revenue.

While Small Business Saturday is officially celebrated on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, you should consider celebrating local establishments year-round.

FINDING SMALL BUSINESSES

To support small businesses, you must be able to find them in your area. According to the American Society for Quality, a small business is defined as a privately owned corporation, partnership or sole proprietorship with fewer employees and less annual revenue than a corporation or regular-sized business. In the wholesale trade, qualifying companies must employ less than 100 employees, and retail operations must not exceed \$6 million in average annual revenue.

Common businesses may include:



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- Local eateries.
- Independent book or music stores.
- Locally owned grocery stores around your community.

BEGIN THE CHALLENGE

Once you commit to only buying locally and from small businesses, begin a campaign to encourage others to get on board. Showcase your purchases to a broad audience online and explain your

thoughts on the shopping experience.

Be sure to broadcast helpful interactions with employees, your satisfaction with the products and the types of available services. Challenge others to visit the facility and express their own encounters.

Local businesses who cannot spend a significant portion of their profits toward advertisement get most of their business from word-of-

mouth referrals. In addition to using your social channels to brag about a company's services, leave reviews on their website and other feedback-based pages.

START A HEALTHY EATING CAMPAIGN

Work with fitness facilities, grocery markets and restaurants in your area to challenge the public with a healthy eating prerogative.

The mission statement should revolve around locally owned eateries that choose high-quality foods for their menu.

Ask your community peers to stick with a 30-day nutritional program where they only consume healthy meals from trusted sources. You can work with your local government and advertising networks to bring your idea to the area.

Marketing on a Budget

The United States Small Business Administration recommends that companies with revenues less than \$5 million should dedicate 7-8% of their profits toward marketing.

This may be a challenging task for businesses entering the industry and struggling to make ends meet. Fortunately, with a solid business strategy and a quality service, getting your name out in public doesn't have to be a significant expense. An excellent way to bring your company and mission statement into the spotlight is by creating a dedicated website.

You should consider writing a compassionate "about us" section where you discuss your passion for your products or services. It's also a great place to update the public with exciting news about your business, reveal upcoming sales and promote new products. Don't forget to link your social media channels to your primary site and invite your customers to engage in the content.

Here are some other ideas to consider when marketing on a budget is vital.

BUILD AN EMAIL LIST

Once your website is estab-



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lished, offer a weekly or monthly newsletter to keep clients excited about your service. It's easy to begin an email list where you periodically connect with many customers who sign up for updates. Greet your subscribers with informative content, introductions of new team members and enticing sale pitches. If cre-

ative writing isn't your niche, consider hiring an affordable freelance writer or task a current employee with developing the newsletters.

SPONSOR A CONTEST

Small businesses can gain a significant amount of attention by offering discounted services or holding a contest

with giveaways. While it may be convenient to allow customers to sign up for the sweepstakes online, make it more enticing for them to visit your business physically. For instance, in-person applicants can receive more chances to win the prize or select a higher-tier award if you have a few items available.

BECOME AN ADVOCATE

When you are dedicated to your community's well-being, local peers will show you respect and support your charitable contributions. Give back to the neighborhood by buying lunch for the city police department, donating to homeless shelters and sponsoring youth sports.

Small Businesses Give Back

When a community thrives, local small businesses also benefit from a healthy economy. Owners of these niche companies understand the relationship and are well-known for their generosity toward charitable causes.

According to the SCORE Association, a recent survey shows that small businesses donate 250% more than larger operations toward local non-profits and community causes. As a customer, you can increase their ability to give back by supporting their services and ensuring they can continue to make beneficial contributions. What better way to make sure your dollars are going to help your neighbors and community members than by shopping locally?

Here are more statistics from “SCORE’s Small Business Charitable Giving: Big Impact on Local Communities” survey.

- Of the surveyed small businesses, their charitable contributions included:
 - Sixty-six percent donated to local charities.
 - Forty-eight percent give to local youth organizations.
 - Forty-two percent support local first responders.
 - Thirty-nine percent gave back to local religious organizations.
 - Thirty-seven percent aid local service groups like the Rotary clubs and Scouts.
 - Thirty-two percent donate food or volunteer at local soup kitchens.
 - Seventy-five percent of small business owners donate an average of six percent of their profits to charities annually.

- In 2019, eighty-one percent of small businesses planned on giving back to their community.
 - Eighty-five percent of consumers have a more positive image of companies that give to charity.
 - Ninety percent of consumers want to know how companies support charitable causes.



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- Charitable giving energizes and engages employees. 93% of employees said that volunteering with their company makes them happier with their employer.
 - Company-sponsored volunteering is shown to:
 - Improve employee leadership and

- broaden professional skill sets.
 - Help employee well-being.
 - Boost morale.
 - Strengthen camaraderie with work colleagues.

These statistics make it easy to see the connection with small business giving and its effects on both its com-

munity members and teammates. Once you decide how you will support small business this year, get loud and proud about it! Share your plan on social media and try to get friends, family members and colleagues involved. Being proactive can make a big difference in the long run.

Thank your Customers

As a small business, you rely on the customers in your community to keep your doors open.

While offering dedicated services and products will keep them coming back, showing appreciation can engage them further into supporting your company. Learn simple ways to express your gratitude and encourage your clientele that their business makes a difference.

Customer appreciation is an excellent approach to reinforcing your relationship with local consumers. In addition to saying thanks during physical interactions, there are numerous ways to spread the love through exciting events and personal effects that can go a long way. Here are some ideas to consider.

RESPOND TO FEEDBACK

Customers are quick to relay their experiences with your company on social media and review webpages. Try to keep up with the positive feedback by personally responding to their comments and thanking them for stopping by. You should also address negative experiences, explain the issue and ensure that it will be resolved in the future.

HOLD A CUSTOMER APPRECIATION EVENT

Invite the public into your



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shop for the day and show your gratitude with a free lunch and exciting activities. Work with other local vendors to schedule a catered-in meal, compile a group of giveaways and create fun games to give the event a family friendly atmosphere.

Not only will a customer

appreciation day show your clients that you care, but you will also gain momentum and excitement in the community and welcome new faces.

Hire helpers to host most of the activities at the event, so you can spend the day interacting with your customers and having wholesome face-

to-face conversations.

BE CREATIVE

As you build relationships with your customers, you will likely get to know more about their lives. Listen for clues that can help you create a custom gift for exceptional clients.

For instance, small gestures

like wishing them a happy birthday with a discount or giving them a product they have shown interest in can be beneficial strategies.

Word will spread about your generosity and appreciation for their business and entice others to invest in your company.

Types of Small Business

Starting a small business isn't as simple as creating a product and selling it to customers.

If you're considering starting a small business or are only interested in learning more about the industry, you should know about the different structures they follow. Educating yourself on all the facets of owning a small business can help you while you're planning your launch. As a customer, it can help you better appreciate all of the hoops small business owners go through to serve you.

Depending on the classification, companies must adjust how ownership, finances, liabilities and taxes are managed. Check out the different statuses that small businesses may qualify for as reported by the Business Partner Alliance.

PARTNERSHIP

A partnership exists when two or more people share ownership responsibilities. There are generally three types of categories this status falls into:

- General partnerships are agreements where owners share all assets, profits and financial and legal responsibilities.
- Limited partnerships reduce liabilities for owners depending on their investment percentages.



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- Joint ventures limit the involvement of partners based on a specific period.

This category works best when partners are familiar with each other and know that they can trust their expertise.

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

The most popular type of small business structure is owned by either a single person or a married couple. This

group has fewer tax responsibilities and receives more flexibility to run their operation. A disadvantage to a sole proprietorship is that all business debts and personal assets can be exposed during legal disagreements.

CORPORATION

Well-established companies often fall under the corporation category as shareholders own them. They are held to

costly administrative fees, double taxation, and face all debts and liabilities. In order to be sold to public interests, a company must be classified as a corporation.

LIMITED LIABILITY CORPORATION

An LLC structure is a combination of a corporation and a sole proprietorship company. Owners of an LLC are

known as members and are protected up to a certain extent from litigation. It's often considered the most flexible status and is an inexpensive venture to set up this type of business structure. A limited liability corporation is also popular because it's unnecessary to have officers and directors or answer to shareholders required in other structures.