



**Shop Local**  
HOLIDAY 2015

# Create Jobs for Christmas

**I**t's better to give than to receive, says the timeless adage. By shopping locally for Christmas, you can keep this holiday spirit alive. You may have more of an impact on your community's economy than you realize.

A recent study by the Small Business Administration, United States Department of Labor and other major organizations found that small businesses have employed about 77 million Americans and accounted for 65 percent of all new jobs over nearly the past two decades.

Those numbers only look to increase as entrepreneurship and small business accelerators continue to work together on new business ideas.

But that kind of job growth is only sustainable if customers support it. That's where you come in.

## TURN PART-TIME INTO FULL-TIME

We've all seen the advertisements for extra employment opportunities during the holiday season. Businesses usually bring on board a large contingent of part-time workers to help them meet the demands of the holiday shopping season — the busiest time for retailers and restaurants both big and small.

Spending your dollars locally means you're giving small business owners a great boost going into the New Year. If revenues are high enough, this can even allow them to retain part-time helpers and turn them into



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full-time employees after the holidays.

Talk about giving a gift. You could be helping keep your friends and neighbors employed during the holiday season and beyond.

## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Many local small business owners also are community leaders, serving in elected positions over our community

boards, city halls and educational institutions.

By shopping locally, you are keeping the spirit of civic activism alive through your investment into the success of your local difference-makers.

And as long as community leaders are invested in the people around them, more work can be done together to start new businesses and employment opportunities throughout your area.

# Join a Movement

**I**t's easier than ever to find a local movement supporting shopping locally. Joining one is even easier.

In most cases, the best way to show love for your local business is to buy from them. The holidays are a great time to give back to your small business community by spending your dollars there.

But what happens when you go beyond the purchase? How much can you achieve by becoming an actual voice in the conversation promoting the act of shopping locally into the mainstream?

## JOIN THE MISSION

Community-focused organizations such as Independent We Stand or the Small Business Administration are continually seeking volunteers to help get the word out on their efforts.

The websites of both organizations offer guidance on how to become involved in their activities.

Choosing to devote your time or resources toward the overall growth of the small business landscape can have a big impact on your community.

## CITY & TOWN MOVEMENTS

Many of the nation's largest cities — and small ones in between — have put together strong “shop local” campaigns to motivate and mobi-



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lize their community members. These initiatives can range from a simple one-day

event to a full-fledged, year-long effort to publicize the importance of shopping local-

ly during the holiday season. Does your community sponsor a small business

board in addition to its chamber of commerce? Do you have opportunities to promote your favorite small businesses to your own customers, partners or management teams?

## BECOME AN ADVOCATE

If there are no major movements in your area, you can still become an advocate for your favorite local shop, and you can do so in creative ways.

Many national organizations conduct large-scale contests to award the most innovative small businesses across the country. Grant money, new equipment or free advertising can be among the prizes doled out for winning entries.

Be on the lookout for such promotions and alert your small business owners when you find one.

You also can take your message or positive purchasing experience to social media. This is another way of promoting your favorite small business to the masses.

Authentic, unforced customer referrals can be the best form of advertising for a small business, so share often. This can allow you to keep giving long after the holidays.

# Go with Local Gift Cards

**A** gift card to a massive box store? We think you can do better than that. A gift card to a local exotic pet store? Now we're talking.

Gift cards are becoming the go-to holiday present for shoppers everywhere. The National Retail Federation says nearly \$30 billion will be shelled out for Christmas presents this year.

Gift cards are simple, easily available and allow the recipient to buy something he or she actually wants.

They can also be extremely thoughtful if you put some energy into buying one.

## KNOW YOUR RECIPIENT

If you're considering buying gift cards as Christmas presents this year, it's important to know the tastes of who you're buying for.

Does the recipient have a favorite local music shop or furniture store? Then this will be easy. If you're not sure where he likes to shop locally, consider his hobbies and interests.

Golf shops, restaurants, pet stores, gunsmiths — there are numerous locally owned businesses to help you find the perfect gift card for anyone on your list.

## PERFECT FOR DECORATIONS

Maybe you're considering buying some decorative pieces



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for your friend's home or office, but you're not quite sure if they'll like what you have in mind. Buy a gift card.

You can find local boutiques, florists and specialty shops with a plethora of decorative options for the home — and ones your friend can pick out herself.

## MATCH IT WITH OTHER GIFTS

Versatility is one of the signature advantages of going with a gift card for your friends and family members. Let's say you have an animal-lover in your family and

are thinking of buying him a fish tank. You can purchase the tank from your local pet shop and add on a gift card for your recipient to pick out his own fish.

The same concept can apply for coffee fanatics. Select a new coffeemaker from your local coffee store

and load a gift card with \$20 for your friend to buy her favorite blends.

Recipients love this because it feels like the gift that keeps on giving. Small business owners love it because it's like two transactions and it brings more traffic back into their store.

# Make it a Family Experience

If you like to shop with young kids or elderly family members, the madness that accompanies Black Friday or even Thanksgiving night shopping at major retailers probably isn't for you.

A stroll down to your friendly downtown establishment for a more laid-back experience may be what you're looking for this year. Shopping locally provides this kind of opportunity.

Even in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, you are likely to find friendly, personalized service at the local business level. This is because you probably know your small business owner by name and can even tell people about his background.

The typical small business in America depends on this kind of connection with its customers. What better way to teach your children about hard work, communication and loyalty than by taking them to your favorite local store and talking shop with the owner?

## TEACH THE VALUE OF MONEY

Here is shopping exercise to try with your youngsters:

- Give them \$10 to buy a locally produced, locally sold item for a sibling or friend;
- Provide a list of five local businesses from which they are allowed to make their purchase;
- Take them to the store and let them pick out items;
- Prompt them to donate the remaining change to a local charity or support an effort the business is promoting; and
- Discuss all of the important lessons that can be learned from the experience, including supporting your local economy, providing more jobs and contributing to causes.

Children can learn through your



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example of shopping locally. And who knows, you may just be creating another community-minded, small business customer for life.

## A BETTER SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

If you're taking an elderly adult out

shopping with you this season, one of the best options to give them a positive experience is shopping locally.

If he has been in your community for a long period of time, undoubtedly he will run into friends, neighbors or family members while you're out on the town.

Slow down and have a leisurely

morning of shopping. Stop by your local coffeehouse before you make your trek downtown. Take in some conversation while you peruse the aisles of your favorite boutiques. Work together to whittle down your shopping list while also wrapping yourselves up in the spirit of shopping locally for the holidays.

# 'Green' Impacts

**M**ore cash in your pocket and less trash in the environment: Shopping locally just makes sense across the board.

If you're looking for ways to achieve both of these objectives this holiday season, start by supporting your local business owners.

They're waiting for you with open arms, ready to help you reach your holiday shopping goals. And they've got the deals to prove it.

## SAVE CASH

'Tis the season to be jolly, not broke! When you embark on a cross-state shopping spree to visit far-away stores, you might as well say goodbye to saving any of your holiday cash.

There's the gas for travel, the expensive dining for multiple meals and the hotel if you plan on staying somewhere overnight.

Compare that experience to finding great local deals in your downtown establishments, eating an affordable meal in your favorite local pizza parlor and heading home to wrap your gifts. It's easy to see which option is both less expensive and less stressful.

Shopping locally isn't just about saving cash, but also about making it stretch further for those around you. More of your money stays local when you spend it in town, meaning your cash is also making more of a differ-



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ence for your neighbors, friends and family members.

## SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Staying local cuts down on

travel for both you and delivery drivers. This is a double benefit that results in cleaner air and eased traffic congestion.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, trucks and locomotives are responsible for 25 per-

cent of smog-causing pollution and the majority of the cancer threat posed by air pollution in some areas.

Local businesses can help the environment in two ways: by using local produce, food and products, and by using

less packaging than larger chain stores.

This helps keep your local community more sustainable and keep more unnecessary plastics out of landfills. Shopping locally equals green and clean.

# Spread the Word

**K**now a great local business? Don't be silent about it. Small businesses need your help, so open up and help spread the word any time you're impressed by a locally owned shop.

## NOTICE THE DETAILS

In many ways, it's the small things that make the best local shops stand out. They might greet their frequent customers by name, stock products that no other stores offer, donate their time and money to worthy local causes and provide a more unique shopping experience that the cookie-cutter chain stores can't match.

Look for these things when you're out shopping, and let your friends know when you find them. You'll be helping your friends out and doing your part to keep your favorite businesses open and thriving.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest have opened new doors for spreading the word about your favorite businesses. In fact, online is where a lot of word-of-mouth marketing happens these days as friends share and photograph their everyday shopping trips — for better or worse.

If you run across a local business that's doing a great job, snap a picture or write a post about it. A few good words on social media can



have a positive impact for the “shop local” movement in your community.

## IT MATTERS

Studies have shown that

buyers trust recommendations from their friends and family far more than they do messages from strangers. Your opinion carries a lot of weight with the people you know, so you can play a big

role in helping people avoid the bad shops and flock to the good ones.

So this Christmas, don't do your shopping in a communications vacuum. Look for the best products and experi-

ences in your community this holiday season and share them with the people around you.

Your friends — and some small-business owners — will thank you.

# Shop Local: By the Numbers

If you're a business owner, the following statistics could help you in planning your holiday strategies. If you're a shopper, they could motivate you to carry out even more local purchases this Christmas season.

- Consumers spent an estimated \$14.3 billion at independent retailers and restaurants on Small Business Saturday, 2014 — up 2.1 percent from 2013, according to the National Federation of Independent Business and American Express.

As a consumer, you should do your part to make sure this year's numbers jump by at least another 2 percent. Business owners should focus on beating their own personal quotas again this year, as well as carrying over the holiday momentum into 2016.

- According to the Small Business Administration, independent retailers return more than three times as much money per dollar of sales than chain competitors. Independent restaurants return more than two times as much money per dollar of sales as national restaurant chains.

- More than 23 percent of shoppers Tweet about purchases they've made, according to Twitter.

Does your business have an @ handle? If not, the holidays are a great time to create one. Many of your customers use Twitter for connecting with local businesses, friends and family members. You can use the popular platform to interact with your "followers" and spread the word on upcoming



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events or promotions.

- If just half of the United States employed population spent \$50 each month in locally owned independent busi-

nesses, it would generate more than \$42.6 billion in revenue, according to the Small Business Administration.

- Nearly half of consumers

plan to buy holiday gifts online this year, reports Google.

If you hope to be relevant as a small business in today's technology age, your products

and services should be available for online purchase. It's easy to do and should be a vital part of your business strategy.