

How to Use "Shop Local" to Your Advantage

You may have heard about "Shop Local" campaigns, but you may have felt that this is a retail deal. Not so – in this article, Linda explains how "Shop Local" campaigns can work to a service business's advantage, too.

How "Shop Local" Works

If you've heard about "Shop Local" (SL) or "Buy Local" campaigns, you probably understood that local retail businesses were trying to get your attention. The SL campaigns usually point to the advantages that small businesses can provide to a town or even to a city. And, those SL campaigns also point to the disadvantages behind shopping at big Box Stores or chains.

But, the SL campaign goes far beyond this simple effort. To educate people about the importance behind shopping local, studies were conducted that showed the monetary value behind supporting local independent businesses. For instance, this [one comparison](#) seems to stick with people:

For every dollar spent locally, 45 cents goes back into the local economy (Civic Economics 2008). On the other hand for every dollar spent in a big box store only 14 cents goes back into the local economy.

So, it might make sense for you to shop local, if you have a local district filled with independent retail establishments. But, how does a SL campaign affect you as a service business? How can a local SL campaign serve independent graphic designers, developers and artists?

The Ideal Shop Local Mentality

The SL campaign was taken to new heights in America by a group called [AMIBA](#) (American Independent Business Alliance). According to this organization:

An Independent Business Alliance works to build vital local economies based on independent, locally-owned businesses and help local entrepreneurs to thrive. They frequently play a key role in preventing chain proliferation and other trends from displacing local businesses. IBAs unite locally-owned independent businesses, citizens and community organizations to achieve this goal.

The loss in the paragraph shown above is the mention about local service businesses. But, they do mention those businesses in an [article](#) [PDF]. In that article's focus, service businesses are those businesses that local retailers, organizations and citizens should use to keep local dollars in the community.

It's time to consider the real costs to a community that loses its locally-owned business base. Independent local businesses employ an array of supporting services. They hire architects, designers, cabinet shops, sign makers and contractors for construction. Local accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants, attorneys, advertising agencies help run it. Local retailers and distributors also carry a higher percentage of locally-produced goods than chains, meaning more jobs for local producers.

In addition, a local shop owner might hire a local artisan to develop hand-made merchandise to fill the shop, a local Web designer to build a Web site and a local developer or hosting service to manage that site and to host it. But, do local businesses really know to hire local service businesses, with the proliferation of global access to outsourced services?

In my experience, I've learned that many shop owners do not hire local, as shop owners are concerned with their business and the bottom line...if it saves time and money to find a Web designer who lives in another state, or even in another country, that shop owner may develop a relationship that is counter to the shop local mentality.

When a community of local independent shop owners decide to learn about SL campaigns and what those campaigns can do for local business, they often want to spread the word (and change their own behaviours). IBAs accomplish this focus by promoting public education, by using cooperative purchasing, branding, marketing and resource sharing and by creating a strong and uncompromising voice for local independent businesses.

What is a Local Independent Business?

According to AMIBA, a local independent business is defined by the following criteria:

- Private, cooperative, employee, or community ownership
- At least 50% owned by area resident(s)
- Full decision-making authority lies with its local owner(s) or members
- Limited number of locations, all within a within a single state or region (determined by local groups)

Other organizations take this definition further by not allowing chain stores to join a local IBA. If, for instance, your town has a restaurant that has a restaurant in other locations – especially in other states or countries – that business is not allowed to join an IBA. This rule may apply even to restaurants that have only two to three other facilities.

How to Find a Local IBA



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HOME ABOUT BALLE BUILDING BLOCKS ABOUT NETWORKS NETWORK SERVICES EVENTS
CONFERENCE NEWS

HOME

THE BUSINESS ALLIANCE FOR LOCAL LIVING ECONOMIES

Over 20,000 entrepreneurs building the new economy

The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) is North America's fastest growing network of socially responsible businesses, comprised of over 80 community networks in 30 U.S. states and Canadian provinces representing more than 20,000 independent business members.



GET INVOLVED

FIND A NETWORK

EVENTS CALENDAR

ANNOUNCEMENTS
& BREAKING NEWS

INVEST IN LIVING ECONOMIES

PBS Special "Fixing the Future"

Featuring BALLE and Local Living Economy Success Stories

Begins airing November 18, 2010

- ▶ Watch the **video teaser** with BALLE's Executive Director Michelle Long.
- ▶ Follow host **David Brancaccio's Travelogue**.
- ▶ Check for the **airdate** in your area.



Buy Local Week starts November 26!

[Click on the logo to learn more.](#)

Are you ready to find a local IBA so that you can inform that organization about your services? Here are a few resources to get you started:

- [AMIBA Resources](#): This map may help you find a local IBA in America.
- [BALLE Networks](#): BALLE (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies) provides a resource where American business owners can find shop local campaigns.

- [BLoC](#): BLoC is a national UK campaign promoting the importance of buying local produce from independent retailers in order to strengthen local economies and help communities preserve their culture and identity.
- [Shop Local First](#) [PDF]: This Friends of the Earth campaign is located in the UK – while it doesn't focus specifically on local campaigns, it can point business owners to local resources throughout the UK. This document also is a great educational tool.

If you cannot find an IBA or a shop local campaign near you, then get up from behind that computer and go out to talk to local shop owners. Find out if anyone is interested in creating an SL campaign, and how you can get started. The resources listed above all provide ideas on how to create a shop local first mentality, as well as a buy local campaign effort.

You can, for instance, get involved with a local online effort, such as the "Best of" campaigns that feature local independent businesses. One such effort is located in [Cambridge](#), England:

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'thebestofcambridge'. At the top right, there is a call to action: 'click here to show your support' with a 'BUY LOCAL' logo. Below this is a navigation menu with options like Home, Events, Business Directory, Member Offers, Local Guide, Your Profile, Contact thebestof, Recommend a Business, and Blog. A search bar is present with 'Find: e.g. hotel, plumber' and 'In: Cambridge'. A banner image shows a group of people on a boat on a river. A sidebar on the left features a 'LOVE-O-METER™' and a list of business categories. The main content area includes a testimonial from Mark F about Heath Road Tyres, a new offer from Doxbond Cambridge, and a new member announcement for Jason H. On the right, there are sections for 'Cambridge loves' (featuring All Eyes Spectacle Makers) and 'local weather' (showing 10°C sunny today and 7°C white cloud on Sunday).

Local service business in the UK also can find ways to promote themselves locally through listings such as the one found at [Up My Street](#):

£100

Sign-up Bonus*

*Terms and Conditions apply

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

UpMyStreet

Your location View map

UK (Great Britain) [GO](#)

new!
[EVENTS](#)

[FINDMYNEAREST](#)

[HOMES & PROPERTY](#)

[LOCAL AREA](#)

[HOME FINANCE](#)

[CATEGORY A-Z](#)

[PREMIUM LISTINGS](#)

SEARCH FOR: <input style="width: 95%; border: none; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="e.g. florists"/>	AND / OR COMPANY NAME: <input style="width: 95%; border: none; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="e.g. UpMyStreet"/>	LOCATED IN: <input style="width: 95%; border: none; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text"/>	Search
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FindMyNearest in UK (Great Britain)

Glasgow • Birmingham • Manchester • Bristol • Westminster • Nottingham • Leeds • Sheffield • Liverpool • Edinburgh • Leicester • Southampton • Norwich • Cardiff • Newcastle-upon-Tyne • Stoke-on-Trent • York • Reading • Preston • Bradford • [View more locations](#)

Browse all business categories

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Popular: [Cinemas](#) • [Museums](#) • [Amusement Parks & Arcades](#) • [Historic Buildings](#) • [Fan Clubs](#) • [Historic Buildings](#) • [Literary Agents](#) • [Paintball Games](#) • [Pianos & Accessories](#) • [Sculptors](#) • [Theatrical Agencies](#) • [See all categories](#)

B2B

Popular: [Cargo Handling](#) • [Cash & Carry Wholesalers](#) • [Textile Importers & Exporters](#) • [Printers Textile & Fabrics](#) • [Brass & Copper Manufacture](#) • [Chemicals Wholesale Distribution](#) • [Cold Storage](#) • [Cycle Accessories Mfns & Wholesalers](#) • [Ice Suppliers](#) • [Quality Award Consultants & Procedure Assessors](#) • [Research & Laboratory Based Activities](#) • [See all categories](#)

BUSINESS SERVICES

Popular: [Printers](#) • [CCTV & Video Equipment](#) • [Office Interior Design Services](#) • [Invoice](#)

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A Signature of Excellence

Promote your business locally

- Up to one million people a month use FindMyNearest to search for a local business
- All information is postcode driven, ensuring accurate

Unfortunately, in America, the Shop Local Web site often lists big box stores, with little participation from local independent business owners:

shopLocal.com™

Search by keyword(s) **Atlanta, GA** [Change Location](#) [Coupons](#) [View all](#) | [Print clipped \(0\)](#)

[Weekly Ads](#) [Top Deals](#) [Coupons](#) [Stores](#) [Electronics](#) [Clothing](#) [Home & Garden](#) [Grocery](#) [Shoes](#) [All Local](#) [All Online](#)

Savings of over \$163,727! 9,000 sales and 158 coupons right now in Atlanta for the week of 11/13/2010.

Your Local Weekly Ads — All in One Place

All the weekly ads from the retailers you know and trust. The best deals, right from the source.

The Top Deals in Atlanta!
The most popular deals in Atlanta, as of 11:48 am, Nov 13, 2010

#1 [MURANO](#)
\$75
Oct 18 thru Nov 13
Dillard's
[See more Top Deals in Clothing and Apparel](#)

#2 [Top Deals in Consumer Electronics](#)

#3 [Buy 2 Get 2 Top Deals in Home & Garden](#)

#4 [\\$19.99 AFTER Top Deals in Special Offers](#)

We Power
ShopLocal partners with the biggest names in the retail industry, like Target, Sears, The Home Depot, CVS/pharmacy and hundreds of others, to bring the great deals in their printed weekly ads to users online.
You can trust ShopLocal to find you the best deals, because we get them right from the source.

Shop by Category
[Automotive, Car & Truck](#) [Babies & Toddlers](#)
[Boating, Sailing & Marine](#) [Clothing & Apparel](#)

Shop Stores Near You
[Aaron's](#) [ACE Hardware](#)
[Babies R Us](#) [Best Buy](#)

Beauty Salons

Conclusion

The American Shop Local Web site shown above is exactly the type of mentality that small local independent business owners must overcome in order to succeed. The idea behind the SL campaign is to avoid every single store mentioned in that "We Power" box shown above and to shop the small business owners who are grouped together on Main Streets or in downtown areas in cities and towns across the globe.

While big box stores do give back to community, the cost is tremendous to the small towns that those box stores occupy. Usually, they pay minimum wages, they don't offer local merchandise and they don't use local services. They may contribute to local fundraising efforts and to local nonprofit organizations, but they may not volunteer to help unless they are leading the specific campaign.

In other words, big box stores, much like large ad agencies or outsourced services, are not connected to community like local independent business owners. If you like the idea of community and the idea of networking locally, then learn more about shop local campaigns in your area. You might learn that you benefit more (and not just financially) from this local business than you do from any online clientele.