

SHOP LOCAL | SHARE YOUR PASSION

SPREAD THE WORD

Know 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.

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 experiences 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 (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 two percent. Business owners should focus on beating their own personal quotas again this year, as well as on carrying over the Christmas momentum into 2016.

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 than national restaurant chains (Small Business Administration, United States Department of Labor).

23.6 percent of shoppers Tweet about purchases they've made (Twitter).

If just half of the United States employed population spent \$50 each month in locally owned independent businesses, it would generate more than \$42.6 billion in revenue (Small Business Administration, United States Department of Labor).

Nearly half of consumers plan to buy holiday gifts online this year (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 commerce strategy.

