



## Promote Buying Local

Summer is in full swing, and we hope that has meant good things for your business. With summer comes a lot of people that are “on the move.” This may cause people to shop out of the area for their needs. This month we found some good pointers to help continually promote local shopping.

Best Regards!



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## SIX WAYS TO PROMOTE A “BUY-LOCAL” CAMPAIGN



BY **Quickbooks**

An active “buy local” campaign can boost your business and the regional economy. But to make it work, consumers need frequent and convincing reminders of the benefits of shopping locally, according to Jeff

Milchen, co-founder of the American Independent Business Alliance.

To do that, Milchen has three words of advice: educate, educate, educate. Research shows that “buy local” programs that succeed long-term “are doing public education work year-round,” he says.

Here are six ways to promote a “buy local” campaign:

**1. SPEAK UP.** Talk to schools and civic groups in your community. Enlist other local business owners to do so, too, and give them a convincing story to tell. “You need to persuade folks of the value of doing business locally out of direct self-interest as a consumer,” Milchen says. Although big-box merchants may win the pricing game, locally owned small businesses can save shoppers’ time — and put more money back into the community.



For example, a study commissioned by Shop Local Raleigh in North Carolina shows that when consumers there buy from independently owned local businesses, 64 percent of the money they spend stays in the Raleigh area. However, only 36 percent stays local when they purchase from big-box retailers, according to Executive Director Jennifer Martin.

**2. ADVERTISE.** A well-conceived ad campaign can help tell your story, such as the "Keep Austin Weird" tagline, which touts the way that locally owned, independent businesses give the Texas city its indie charm.

**3. PUBLICIZE.** Consider writing an op-ed for your community newspaper about the benefits of shopping locally. Back up your argument with statistics; the Business Alliance's website offers a wealth of data on the benefits of shopping locally. Pitch news stories, too, to the media. "A 'buy local' campaign isn't big news," Milchen said. "But if you can peg it, for example, to the story of a local hardware store that gave building materials to a family that lost their home in a fire, that helps lead into a story of why [buying locally] is important."

**4. RECOGNIZE.** Host your own Oscar Night. The "buy local" campaign of Portland, Maine, recently hosted an Indie Biz Awards ceremony to showcase local companies. Winners were announced in categories like "Portland's Best Kept Secret" and "Environmental Hero."

**5. REWARD.** Start a loyalty program for shoppers who support member businesses. The program can be as simple as offering a paper-based discount or

frequent-buyer card, but many local business alliances are moving to more sophisticated approaches, Milchen says. "These include debit [cards] that are swiped to track purchases at independent members' businesses and return a percentage in the form of credits, [which are] good at any participating member," he says.

**Another twist:** Merchants in the Asheville Grown Business Alliance in North Carolina partnered with local schools to create the Go Local Card. Shoppers pay \$15 for the card; \$10 goes to help local schools, and the remaining \$5 supports the "buy local" program. Cardholders enjoy special offers and discounts at member businesses.

**6. ENTERTAIN.** Consider hosting events that will bring consumers to your community's shopping district and boost awareness of locally made products, such as Shop Local Raleigh's Brewgaloo and the Louisville (Ky.) Independent Business Alliance Beerfest. Both events featured beers from local microbreweries along with food from local eateries and performances by local bands.

Remember, every little bit of awareness-building helps: You don't need to change shoppers' buying habits drastically overnight to make a difference. "Enticing a portion of residents to choose local and independent just slightly more often ultimately yields big dividends for your local businesses," Milchen notes.

Shop Local Raleigh, which has grown to 300 members since its founding in 2009, hosts monthly networking events. There, Martin says, "We hear more and more positive stories from our members about how Shop Local Raleigh has helped them and their business."

**QUESTIONS?** Our lenders are here for you!

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