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THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

by Kent Business Blog on Jul 19th, 2013 · No Comments



Local businesses are just that – local – they are right on your doorstep and ready and eager to provide you with a service or product(s). Small businesses should not rely on web sales alone. Face to face sales are just as important and companies should strive to be a part of a thriving economic environment. You don't have to look far to see other businesses nearby that could potentially provide a service or a product that would be of use to you. If you use them, the chances are they will return the compliment, if not to buy then at least to recommend you. More importantly, if the businesses in your area are all thriving, this will attract

others to the area, hopefully leading to more sales for all of you.

Small businesses have a lot to contend with. For one thing they are competing with larger manufacturers or chains and can often lose out on cost. But small businesses have so much more to offer and it is important to showcase this and to prove to potential customers that value for money does not necessarily come down to just one thing – the cost of the product or service – it is about the level of service and care that comes with it. And when it comes to this, small businesses have the competitive edge.

Stacy Mitchell, Senior Researcher from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (USA) says:

'A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long term.'

In order to survive in today's economic environment, the quality of the products and services provided by smaller companies has to be second to none. Knowing your customers is paramount to being able to provide that 'personal touch'. If people know who you are they will tell others; you cannot afford to ignore the importance of 'word of mouth' referrals. But it works both ways. When local businesses invest revenue in to the local economy it can enrich the community as a whole. Being part of the community gives you solid roots in your local area, something that is vital to the survival of your business.

Fraser Young is a managing partner of [MF Communications](#), a telecoms provider based in High Brooms. He says that in so many industries nowadays, as consumers, we are merely considered a number by the larger companies.

'When it comes to requiring any services from these companies you often only get to speak to someone at a call centre who has no idea how to fix your problem or who to direct you to, unless it is written in their script,' he says.

Mr Young's strong ethos of good customer service translates to his own business.

'I feel that it is really important that we know all our clients well. We don't have a call centre as we believe that our customers have the right to speak to a qualified member of our team who can help

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and advise them and who they can put their trust in.'

He adds, 'we treat every client or potential customer as an individual and understand that no two companies are the same, nor will their needs be the same. When it comes to providing telecommunications' services, you can't pick up a package off the shelf and expect it to suit everybody. Being able to provide flexible and tailor-made packages are both advantages of being an individual company and it is one of the reasons why our clients put so much trust in us.'

As well as providing a highly personal level of service and potentially unique and individual products that may not be found on the mass market, there are other advantages of small businesses that must be given consideration. The environmental impact of buying locally, in particular, cannot be ignored. Having a shorter distance to travel in order to purchase goods means lower fuel consumption and costs for the customer. In addition, for the company selling its products, transporting the goods locally translates to a cost saving on fuel as well as reducing the company's carbon footprint.

Lastly, a community that is thriving will help to further support the local economy by providing jobs for the people of the area. This negates the need for local residents to move away in order to find work and it means that if they live and work in the area, then they are also more likely to spend money there.

So by providing jobs for locals, supporting local causes and buying from or selling to each other, local businesses really do have an important role to play to help boost their local economy. If you are a small business, think about how you can support other businesses in your area. If you are a consumer, the next time you need to buy a product or require a particular service, take a look around you to see what local companies there are. You might just be surprised at how much there is to offer right on your doorstep.

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