

Five Reasons for Buying Local

By Martin Brossman – Success Coach and Author of *Social Media & On-line Resource Directory for Business*

You can't help noticing the current buzz about buying local, re-inspired by deep concern for the environment and the necessities of the economic slowdown. Restaurants are proudly announcing more locally-grown foods on their menu, and many of our friends announce their decision to shop smaller specialty retailers instead of chain discount stores.

Aside from the warm fuzzy feeling you get from helping your neighbor, there are some strong tangible benefits to buying from local merchants. Buying local is beneficial to the environment in a number of different ways, while at the same time boosting the local economy. There are also political implications to your buying choices. Here are a few of the ways your family wins when you buy local.

1. Reduced shipping distance equals lower environmental impact

When you buy goods in your home town, you reduce carbon emissions and fossil fuel consumption by virtue of the simple fact that no one has to ship the goods to you from a long distance. When you purchase industrially-grown produce, for example, it typically travels 1,500 miles¹ or more before reaching your dinner table. The environmental impact is staggering. A 2009 study² revealed that in the state of Iowa alone, fuel consumption could be reduced by up to 346,000 gallons per year if 10% more of the state's food were grown locally. The same study stated that annual carbon dioxide emissions would likely decrease by up to 7.9 million pounds.

2. Local dollars stay in your community

When your dollars go to local merchants, they are much more likely to buy from other local merchants than large corporate-owned stores. Most larger merchants are contractually obligated to buy from suppliers outside the towns where they operate. They often buy in bulk from central locations. The increased number of steps in the supply chain not only adds no intrinsic value, but often results in lower product quality. The reinvestment of business revenues into other local businesses generates local tax revenues.

3. The economic boom and bust cycle stabilizes over the long term

A locally-based economic infrastructure is less likely to suffer radical oscillations, due to the fact that it doesn't depend on a small number of large businesses for the majority of its revenue. For example, suppose a factory moves into town and employs a large number of the town's residents. The newly created jobs will attract more people and create a swell in house prices. Then, if economic conditions force the factory to close down or move offshore, there will be no cushion to absorb the economic impact of these lost jobs. The real estate market will decline, leaving affected families underwater on their mortgages.

When a local economy derives its income from a large number of small businesses, economic recessions are less extreme. Since small businesses move into town one by one, and economic growth occurs at a slow, natural pace, the likelihood of a sudden "gold rush" drops off, and prices are less likely to artificially spike.

4. Communities have a greater say in their own future

Economic dependency on a few large businesses shifts political leverage away from the local community. Companies who dominate local economies tend to get their way, whether citizens of their host communities like it or not. Your everyday decision to buy from small grassroots entrepreneurs or big-box stores has an impact on the power structure governing your home town.

5. Local pride increases as revenues improve the local environment

A Google search can show you exciting evidence of nationwide support for local independents. Innovative Chambers of Commerce and merchants' associations are implementing downtown revitalization projects, local currencies, networking events, joint advertising and community education efforts to bring small towns back to life.

"Shop Local" campaigns are so successful that Corporate marketers are climbing onto the local message bandwagon. They may use terms like "shop nearby" or "your local _____." It's a trend that's widespread enough to have gained the name "local washing."

So how can you tell who is REALLY LOCAL in your home town? They are locally-owned AND independent,--and committed to making their community a better place to live. There are also many franchises with local owners that are important to support as well, keeping money in the community.

Just pause and think before you shop--can I get this from a locally-owned business? Help others become aware of the value of buying locally. If you see the value, share it with a friend. I just invited a friend to lunch and said, "Let's go to New World Coffee House for lunch; it's good food and local-owned." Share your stories of buying local!

Contact Martin Brossman: martin@coachingsupport.com or (919)847-4757. His business coaching and training website is www.ProNetworkingOnline.com See the original blog on SBCSpeakers.com including reference and other training Martin offers for Small Business Center and Chambers. Thanks to Dave Baldwin for his help with this article.