

TIP SHEET: COUPON BOOK

These tips are based on Sustainable Connections' 6 years publishing "Where the Locals Go", a coupon book that is now the best seller at our independent book store and drives sales to local businesses.



1. Production

Who provides coupons? If you don't already have a business membership, you'll need to decide which businesses can participate and the geographic region you want to draw from. We apply the same criteria for participation in our book as we do for our business membership. Any business that participates must be a local, independently owned business within the four county region we serve.

The types of businesses that participate greatly influence the appeal and success of your book. It is extremely important to include businesses that can offer coupons for items and services people really want and need. When developing your list of independent business participants be mindful of the quality of the coupons they can offer, the popularity of the business and what that means for the overall success of the book.

Example – Our book includes three \$5 off coupons at each of two popular local groceries. Using just two makes up the book's \$10 purchase price!

Process: Once you've developed your list of participants it's time to invite them to participate. Do this by sharing an example book from another community, and your own new well-designed cover image. This will help businesses to know it will be a quality book. Also, before the initial outreach happens you need to know the format of the coupons.

Example - Our book and coupons are designed by our graphic designer with one standard format. They include the business name, address, phone, web address, coupon offer, business tagline and logo.

ALSO: We've found it helpful to offer suggestions of good coupon offers and only accept coupon offers with monetary value that offer a good value.

Timeline: It's important to allow plenty of time!

Example - June: work with designer on cover, layout, & template coupon; develop target list and outreach to new participants. **July:** solicitation for coupon offers due at end of July; find content sponsors/advertisers; finish content draft. **August:** process coupon offers; finalize design for cover, content and coupons. **September:** coupon proofs out to participants; final read through of book; process changes and corrections; line up sellers. **October:** book to printer; develop marketing materials; write press release.

2. Funding

The cost of producing a coupon book includes labor, design, printing and promotion, and all depend on the size and scope of the book you produce. There are many opportunities to raise funds and minimize costs.

Coupons, Content and Ads: Selling coupon space is one of the biggest opportunities to generate revenue. To determine a good price, research the cost of other advertising opportunities in your area.

OUR INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- 1) To assist people in finding products and services at local businesses; and to motivate them to experience a purchase at these businesses.
- 2) To provide a business benefit to Sustainable Connections members. (All are eligible to receive a free coupon listing).
- 3) To inspire people to "be local" by living healthy lifestyles - low in environmental impact, active in community connections, and supportive of local businesses first!



2009 "Where the Locals Go!" Coupon Book

Besides valuable coupons, written content is an added value to your book. Not only can content be a valuable resource to your readers but can also meet education goals of potential funders.

Example – WA State Department of Ecology provided a grant to us to include content about one of their healthy watershed programs.

Ad space can also be offered to businesses for which a coupon isn't a fit.

**Be sure ads and paid content enhances the book by aligning with the book's goals and offering something valuable and relevant to the reader.

Sponsors: Finding sponsors for your book is another great way to raise funds. Sponsors' logos can be included in the book, on promotional posters and named in press releases. This is another great opportunity for local businesses to participate in and support your Local First Campaign and can be especially appealing to businesses that might not have a product or service that a coupon can be applied to, i.e. financial institutions, or independent newspapers.

Cover price: The cover price should cover the costs of producing the book and should be set at a reasonable price. Local First coupon books range from \$10-\$25.

Trade: To minimize costs, some volunteer labor can be used and trade relationships can be developed with printers, designers and media outlets.

Example – We have in-kind relationships with our printer who sponsors our Local First campaign and our local weekly newspaper who is also a sponsor. These relationships result in a reduced printing cost and free advertising.

3. Selling/Distribution

Once your book is completed you'll want to get it out into the public and in peoples' hands as soon as possible. You'll need to line up book sellers and advertise the book.

Sellers: Books should be sold at high traffic locations and can be sold by participating businesses and at local events and festivals. Books can also be sold by other groups as a fundraiser for their group if your budget can afford it.

Example - Our book is sold on consignment by some of our business members. They collect the money for the books and in-turn pay us the full cover price for the books. Members who sell the book for us do not profit from the sale. We do, however give them one free book for every 15 they sell and they gift them to employees and good customers. We have a simple contract that sellers sign so they are fully aware of the arrangement. Monthly check-in calls are made to see if sellers need more copies and if they have any money for us to pick up.

Marketing: Marketing the book is a lot of fun with many opportunities to get creative. Complimentary books can be sent, along with a press release to local radio and TV stations. Posters and signage can be displayed at participating businesses and at sales locations. Participating businesses can also post information on their websites, in their newsletters, and on reader boards. Colorful ads in local media outlets and press releases are also good ways to spread the word. Books can also be donated to local causes like silent auctions and as door prizes at fun events.



Point of Sale signage.

WHERE THE LOCALS GO! COUPON BOOK DETAILS:

- We print 4000 books at a printing cost of \$4.50 each.
- The 2009 book is 184 pages with 252 coupons and 16 content pages.
- Cover price is \$10.
- Coupons are good for 1 year and expire 10/31/09 (exceptions on a case by case basis).
- All coupons are from Sustainable Connections business members.

OTHER EXAMPLES:

- <http://belocalnc.org/coupon-book-overview/>
- <http://www.laplatalocal.org/>,
- <http://www.thegreenzebra.org/>
- <http://www.buffalofirst.org/resources/couponbookinfo>