

TIP SHEET: Think Local First Campaign

These tips are based on Sustainable Connections' experience creating and maintaining a campaign that has changed the purchasing behavior of 3 in 5 local households.



1. Choose Who, Where, and What

It is up to each community to determine how best to design their Local First campaign. Early decisions will include where and who is "local". Some communities have natural borders whether a mountain range or a major river. A county line can also be a border. The decision should be based on what "place" people in your community identify with. What do they consider "home"? To determine eligible business participation, think about who makes your community 100% unique. Every town has many of the same national businesses, but which businesses are owned in your area and can't be found anywhere else? Which businesses have full autonomy to maximize the economic multiplier by choosing local potatoes for their french fries and local graphic designers for their signage? In our community we said as long as at least 50% of the ownership (therefore the decision making) was in our four county area, and those owners had full autonomy over every decision for their business – we would promote them as 100% local.

2. Develop a Steering Committee/Working Partners

A steering committee is useful for all phases of developing a Local First campaign and should be hand selected. It can't be over-stated how critical it is that your committee be made up of your community's most successful, well respected and visible retailers including owners of local bookstores, grocers, community newspapers, local hardware, drug and office supply stores and your neighborhood coffee shops. Local business owners trust one another and when you start to recruit participants they'll want to know who else is involved. These business owners will also know how to communicate with other business owners and what elements of a campaign would work at point of sale.

Other good committee participants might include a representative from local government, from a downtown business association or revitalization program and a marketing professional.

ALSO: Make sure the committee is made up of can-do, positive people!

3. Develop a Marketing/Communications Plan

After determining your focus, use your steering committee to develop the goals of your campaign. (For instance: That people in your community would think locally grown, made, and/or owned FIRST for any want or need.) You can then decide how you will communicate your message and what your marketing plan will be. Your plan should clearly define your audience, identify barriers and benefits to your audience acting on your message, and decide the best way to share the message with your audience.

Now comes one of the most fun steps; develop your logo and slogan. Logos and slogans should always be positive and call others to action. Logos should feature anything that is representative of and resonant within your community, (a local mountain – not a shopping bag). Marketing materials should all be professionally designed.

OUR INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- 1) To increase the percentage of businesses and consumers that purchase locally produced and grown products and services from locally owned businesses.
- 2) To maximize the share of wealth that is distributed and controlled within the local community, for the benefit of the local community.



Campaign logo features locally loved Mt Baker.



The "be local" bee mascot!

4. Develop a Budget & Funding Plan/Partners

Now it's time to create an action plan. This will help you see where you'll need funds and will be the perfect time to develop your budget. There are many options for funding your campaign. The best is self-financing from a combination of business and local government sponsorship as well as business participation fees. It's likely that your earliest campaign sponsors will be members of your steering committee and the businesses they invite to join them. Many communities have found success in asking local government community and economic development departments to be sponsors.

5. Recruiting Business Participation

The most effective method is person-to-person recruitment. Arming your steering committee with talking points and having them each personally call 30 business owners will give you a great base. Additionally, your committee can distribute information at their professional meetings with other business owners, e.g. monthly business associations.

Less effective and more expensive are direct mail and advertising. However, these techniques have the advantage of being less time intensive and reaching beyond the core of businesses your committee knows.

Once businesses join they should receive a 'marketing kit'. Our kit included a 18"x24" poster, window decal, a welcome letter, a sponsor sheet, a tip sheet, frequently asked questions, top ten reasons to Think Local, a sample letter for business newsletters, an authorization to use the logo, customer thank you notes, and a disk with the logo and original artwork for printing by the participant.

6. Launching your Campaign

Several communities have an annual Buy Local Day or Week. This can be a great way to launch your campaign. A tangible date with activities and publicity is a great incentive for new businesses to sign up. It also provides a great media focal point.

Example Buy Local Day/Week

Why: To strengthen awareness of the benefits of shopping with locally owned, independent businesses in your region.

Where: Encourage participating businesses to have in store activities of their choice; sales, samplings, readings, demonstrations, window displays, etc.

When: The holiday season is a great time for a Buy Local event. Folks are already shopping. Encourage them to Think Local First.

How: Remind participants to post campaign materials and use the logo in their own advertising. Distribute flyers in your community. Do extensive media outreach.

7. Our top 3 recommendations

- Your steering committee must be made up of successful local businesses.
- Promote what's special about your place. Business participants should be independently owned – not just any business chain within a geographic border.
- Keep it positive! Promote what you're for rather than what you're against.

8. Other Resources

- Books: Deep Economy, Bill McKibben; Going Local, Michael Shuman
- Sustainable Connections: www.SustainableConnections.org/thinklocal; Local First How-to Kits also available
- BALLE: Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, www.livingeconomies.org
- Institute for Local Self-Reliance: www.bigboxtoolkit.com



Seasonal posters keep the message current.



Our coupon book is a local best seller.



Buy Local Week posters feature 10 different businesses and 10 reasons to think local first.