

7 Ways to Support a Local Business without Spending \$1

Written by the City of Pontiac Community Development Team
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1. Leave a Positive Review

This only takes a couple of minutes and can be done from the comfort of your couch.

Did you have a really great experience with the owner or an employee the last time you were at your favorite store? Or did you recently have a great meal that you took home to your family? Share that story. Those good stories are read by potential customers and can lead to more business.

Small businesses rely heavily on reviews. Think about it — when you're looking for a new place to try in your neighborhood and you see they only have two stars on Google My Business, you're probably less likely to stop there than one with five stars.

"If you're finding yourself with a little more free time than usual while social distancing, now is the perfect time to hop on Yelp, Google My Business or Facebook to share a kind note about your experience with a local business. Be sure to include photos of the delicious food you ate or the beautiful layout of the store to add even more value to your review," said Ashly Perssico, author for Business2Community.com.

2. Refer a Friend

The absolute best way to support a local small business would be to refer your family and friends to the business. Word of mouth is so effective yet so simple, especially since we live in a relatively small town. If there is a business you love, talk about it, tell your friends, family, loved ones and help spread their message.

3. Social Media

Due to social distancing, people are spending more and more time on their phones and computers. That means more eyes on social media pages.

Be an Advocate!

"One great way to show your appreciation for small business is by sharing a well-loved product on social media. Snap a picture of the product being used in the real world with a caption about how it's benefited you, helped you or even the compliments you've received on it in the past," said Elad Burko, founder and CEO of Paperwallet. "Tagging the company and providing a link

gives them value from the post, brings their brand to the attention of an audience they may not have reached otherwise, and gives them a well-deserved confidence boost in the process. Word of mouth is a powerful component of marketing, so if you want to show your support for a business – don't stop at being a consumer, be an advocate."

When you highlight a local business on your social media, it can have a catalytic affect: You're making your network aware of the business and how they can contribute. Jackie Moran, founder of [Wonderpuff Cotton Candy](#), said, "The best way to continue to support local businesses is to let your community know we still exist. Share on social media your favorite local businesses and encourage your community to do the same."

Liking and Commenting

Everyone loves a good recommendation. And, sometimes, advocating for your favorite small business is as easy as clicking 'like' or commenting on their latest social media post.

Emily Jaime, author for Yireh states, "Like and comment on their social media post, as well as watch their social media stories. This may sound really simple, but it means a lot to a smaller brand. With algorithms on almost every social media platform it can be hard for a brand to get seen in a sea of big names. However, if you're constantly engaging with their posts (liking, commenting), it shows the algorithm that people are interested in what that brand has to say, which can spread their reach. So, you are inadvertently helping them market, without changing your routine much.

Hashtags and Photo Tagging

Alexisthegreek.com says that you should use the business's hashtag and tag your photos. "Lots of places have a hashtag posted somewhere inside, encouraging visitors to announce their experience on social media. It can seem hokey from the outside – but really it isn't! Using a small business's hashtag gives strangers a way to preview the experience of visiting that business through the eyes of other consumers.

Also, when a business is tagged often by people within the same social circles, then social platforms start recommending that businesses' page or profile to other users who seem to be a part of the of the same network. The internet can be spooky sometimes – but sometimes it can be amazing!"

Now is the perfect time to scream your favorite small business names from the proverbial rooftop. If you share one of their posts to your Facebook feed or Twitter account and a couple of your followers make a purchase, you've directly helped this business by merely sharing your love for them!

4. Join them Live!

Hop on the business page's live video and be a participant. Cyrissa Carlson, photographer and business coach from Ohio says, "This will give the speaker a boost of confidence as they "sell" their brand to the world! Live video can be intimidating (especially to a silent room), so engage

with your friends on live. Repeat key points. Ask questions. Respond to questions. Get the crowd going. And help calm their nerves!”

5. Change the way You Follow Your Favorite Small Business on Facebook

Alexisthegreek.com states that you should “Go to one of your favorite business pages and click the drop-down next to the “Following button. Select “Show first.” And bam! You’ve just made a powerful change in the way you get to interact with the posts on that page.

Here’s why: Facebook’s algorithm for business pages is basically to bury their posts under all the other stuff personal users see in their home feeds. This is intended to benefit the average user, who is an individual mostly trying to connect with friends and family. But we personal users hit that “Follow” button on business pages for a reason!

For the record, selecting “Show first” doesn’t mean that every time you log on, the first thing you will see in your feed will be that business’s posts- it just means Facebook will read the page as a friend instead of a business, and put their posts at the top of your feed with your friends’ posts instead of at the bottom with the posts that Facebook deems as potential spam.”

6. Subscribe to Newsletters

Receiving a lot of e-mails can get annoying, we know. It’s important to pick and choose which you really align yourself with and like reading their content. This is a great way to support a small business and you can even forward e-mails to your friends who may enjoy their content as well!

7. Write an encouraging E-mail

Want to make someone’s day? Send them an encouraging email or letter if you can’t visit your favorite business in person. “Often times, a smaller brand wonders if anyone even cares what they are contributing to the world. It can totally turn someone’s day around to offer a small word of encouragement,” said Emily Jaime, author for Yireh.