

Come in We're **LOCAL!**SM

AMIBA.net

Building “Buy Local” Campaigns that Shift Culture and Spending:

A Guide to Helping Your Independent Businesses
and Community Thrive

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Calls to “buy local” seem to have sprung up everywhere in recent years. Recognition of the crucial role small businesses play in creating jobs, strengthening community cohesion and enhancing local character is rising -- thanks largely to a rapidly growing number of community coalitions that have formed specifically to support local independent business and build thriving local economies.

The American Independent

I. The Impact of Effective “Buy Local” Campaigns

For several years running, the [Institute for Local Self Reliance](#) (ILSR) has executed nationwide (U.S.) surveys of consumer-oriented independent businesses to track their year-to-year changes in sales. Respondents to the 2014 survey reported a strong annual sales increase of 5.3% as a whole, but the increase varied hugely based on one key factor: Businesses in communities with a “buy independent/buy local” campaign run by an Independent Business Alliance® or similarly-modeled organization reported a strong 7.0% sales increase compared to just 2.3% for those in areas without such a campaign.

Across all seven survey years, in up years and down, independent businesses served by these pro-local/independent campaigns have dramatically outperformed peers in communities lacking them.

The difference between jumping well ahead of inflation versus

Business Alliance (AMIBA) helps communities across North America implement and sustain effective “buy local” campaigns in communities of all sizes, ideologies and economic circumstances. This publication draws from that cumulative experience to summarize key principles for independent business owners, advocates and local officials interested in inspiring people to do more of their business locally.

This primer, enabled by

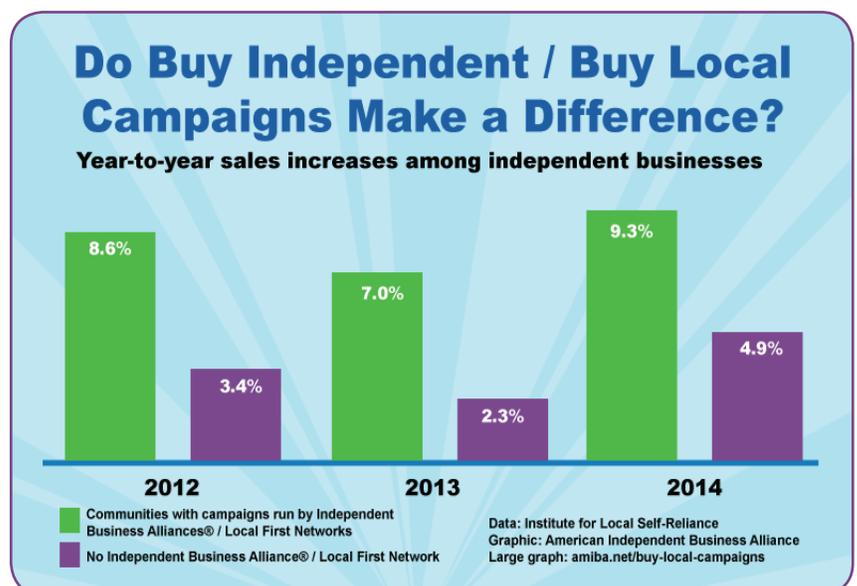
underwriting from American Express OPEN, aims both to inspire more of these efforts and help existing campaigns improve. When executed properly, local campaigns to inform the public about the benefits of doing business locally can build a lasting culture of support for small business and help local entrepreneurs to thrive.

falling behind it easily can mean the difference between success and failure for many small businesses.

This success also is reflected in community-level surveys. For example, 79% of businesses participating in Maine’s Portland Buy Local initiative said the campaign was benefiting their business and 68% said they gained new customers as a result of it. But before gathering the troops to start designing your “buy local” ads and slogans, consider this: a

majority of such campaigns fail to create notable benefits for local businesses and fade quickly.

So why consider one for your city or town? First, most failures are due to readily avoidable errors and omissions. Second, the return on investment can be huge when done right -- especially for businesses and groups who play the most visible roles. And many effective campaigns have succeeded with minimal budgets.



Click on image to view larger version.

II. Keys to Shifting Culture and Spending

Effective Framing

Emphasize the Virtues of Independents

Be sure to emphasize locally-owned *independent* businesses in your messaging. While directly critiquing chains or absentee-owned businesses is not essential, your audience should understand you intend “local” to mean local ownership and control, not merely location.

Many campaigns started by local governments or chambers of commerce in recent years defined “local” as simply a physical location (often aimed at capturing more sales tax revenue). These campaigns tend to yield little impact and dissolve because locals are confused or dismiss the message entirely when they see major chains lumped in with genuine local businesses.

Differentiate Our Roles as Citizens and Consumers

Independent locally-owned businesses generally thrive in compact, walkable commercial districts while chain development tends toward stand-alone clusters

at the periphery of communities (each requiring separate parking lots and generally discouraging any non-auto access). Examine your local policies and incentives to see if they encourage healthy habitat for growing locally-owned businesses.

Development incentives are just one of many realms where public policy shapes business composition and engaging citizens can advance your goals. Be deliberate in your choice of language and be aware some common slogans can be a double-edged sword. For example, the phrase “vote with your dollars” may be effective in helping locals consider the impact of their spending choices, but equating consumer choices with our rights as citizens may undermine important policy goals.

Use Inclusive Language to Build a Broad Base

Independent retailers, restaurants and others competing directly with chains and the largest online retailers are obvious prospects to support your local outreach, but

frame your campaign to include all potential allies. Your retailers will be better served by a larger and more powerful campaign and gain no benefit from focusing too narrowly on shopping.

For example, focusing only on brick-and-mortar businesses or employing a shopping bag as your permanent logo (though appropriate for a shopping-focused holiday campaign) needlessly excludes other independents. The strongest campaigns engage businesses of every sector, demographic group and location in your community (the largest single segment of most Independent Business Alliances is service providers, including many with no walk-in location).

Even the term “buy” can be limiting, so many groups use phrases like “go local” or “choose local first” to demonstrate their inclusivity. Consciously referencing banks, agriculture, home-based businesses and others will ensure your message serves all your local independents.

What is a Local Independent Business?

Criteria suggested by AMIBA are:

1. Private, worker, community or cooperative ownership.
2. At least 50% locally-owned (definitions of “local” will vary based on community circumstances).
3. Decision-making authority is vested in local owners and not subject to conditions dictated remotely.
4. The business has a limited number of outlets and limited geographic range.

What about franchises? Franchises typically combine local ownership with obligations and standards determined elsewhere. AMIBA offers free guidance on how to work positively with local franchise owners.



Don't invoke Pity or Guilt (Usually)

Take every opportunity to praise and reinforce people's efforts to "go local" and recognize almost nobody does all their business locally. Generally, avoid guilt-based messages until you gain understanding of the few instances in which they can be effective. One case where a dose of guilt can work is challenging customers who use local merchants as fitting rooms or showrooms, then buy online to avoid paying for that valuable service (often to evade sales tax, too). Invoking the loss of tax base to support local schools, firefighters, etc., can be persuasive [when executed with the right balance](#) of self-interest (the store won't be there for you if many people do this) and guilt.

Steer clear of messaging that suggests your local businesses need to be "saved" or patronizing them is a charitable act. Lasting shifts result only when people respect and appreciate the values top-quality independents provide. Also, while such messaging does appeal to some business owners, it rarely resonates with the best-run independents and may offend some.

DrinkLocal.



ShopLocal.



The Austin Independent Business Alliance promotes all local indie businesses through a series of trade-specific ads featuring their armadillo mascot.

The Message: Why Independents Matter

The ultimate goal for a buy local campaign is to create a cultural shift whereby: 1. most residents come to identify themselves as "the kind of person who supports my local independents," and 2. view their community as one that supports local entrepreneurs and makes doing business locally a point of pride.

Creating this culture of support for local independents cannot be bought with a marketing blitz or short-term work, but can be achieved through sustained, multi-faceted education that embeds several key concepts into residents' consciousness.

While doing business locally offers many benefits, they all fall into two main categories:

1. Benefits to you as a consumer
2. Benefits to you as a citizen and to society (which focus on benefits to your own community and benefits to the environment and world beyond it)

Determine messages you emphasize according to your target audience and the outreach vehicle used. Material for distribution at hotels or college dorms, for example, should focus almost entirely on customer value. Op-eds in your local newspaper might place greater emphasis on community benefits, while

presenting "big picture issues" may make sense when writing for some niche publications.

The message tone also will vary by audience. When the Boulder Independent Business Alliance (BIBA) designed ads for local independent weekly and university newspapers, the goal was to paint indies as the hip place to shop, dine, or visit, so they created the tagline "You're not a clone why shop at one?"SM – a far cry from "Treat yourself to the best," which BIBA used for ads in the upscale *Boulder Magazine*. Sophisticated, targeted messaging is a key factor distinguishing the most effective campaigns from the rest.

Building Local Wealth and Job Creation

Several compelling studies demonstrate the increased [local economic multiplier](#) resulting when people spend at local independents, and other economic arguments for supporting local business. [Studies](#) by the private research firm, [Civic Economics](#) and the non-profit [ILSR](#) both have shown dollars spent at local independent businesses in locally-owned property return, on average, \$45 or more per \$100 spent to the local economy, compared to just \$14 or less for \$100 spent at a chain outlet.

This results in a direct multiplier three or more times greater when people spend with independents, compared to patronizing local chain outlets (and infinitely more than buying online). We all know small businesses are a major engine of job creation, and census data on independents and annual reports of their largest competitors help understand why.

It shows small businesses create more jobs per sales dollar than chain competitors and several times more than large online retailers. Since spending on typical big-box goods like hardware, basic clothing, or housewares is a relatively fixed pie (we don't buy more socks or toasters just because a new venue is selling them), new big box development is unlikely to yield new jobs, but simply displace jobs in one business for another.



Make it easy to go local with searchable websites, apps and printed guides. Shown: Homegrown El Paso's mobile app, Buy Local Guide (Louisville).

When communities like Barnstable, Massachusetts [studied](#) the fiscal impact of big box and fast food development on the community and taxpayers, they concluded dollars spent to provide safety and public services for such unfocused growth was greater than the community would reap, meaning higher taxes or reduced services for locals.

Local independents employ an array of supporting services that can include contractors, accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants, attorneys, sign makers, advertising agencies, and many others. Local retailers, restaurants, and distributors also carry a higher percentage of locally produced goods, creating additional markets and jobs for local producers and more wealth in the community. These jobs also tend to be higher-wage positions with greater career potential.

While chain outlets also employ local residents, their business model uses a minimum of local goods and services, while profits accrue elsewhere.

Community Character and Consumer Choice

Unique independent businesses play a vital role in maintaining a

community's distinct character. And as more and more cities and towns attract the same array of cookie-cutter businesses, those with unique offerings and atmosphere stand to gain business.

Though a single local shop or service provider may carry a smaller selection than a big chain, a large number of independent outlets, each serving their own niche, creates far greater diversity and choices overall.

Value v. Cheapness

Define "value" proactively as more than merely the cheapest product or service -- where chains and online giants admittedly have the upper hand. Make people wary of choosing the cheapest option and point out that product lifespan and customer service can make a slightly higher priced product or service from a local independent a better long-term value. Use stories to make your point memorable!

Kenyon-Noble Hardware in Bozeman, Montana highlights the value of its expertise with ads saying "It's not only what you can buy from Kenyon-Noble, it's what you can learn from them." The ads promote the store's ability to save

customers time and money with staff product knowledge and free advice on household projects. They also smartly implemented a price-matching offer when the two big-box hardware chains moved in blocks away, ensuring they were perceived as price-competitive.

Other notable benefits of local independent businesses, based on your target audience's interests, include:

Reducing Traffic and Environmental Impact

Independent businesses consume less land, generate less traffic and infrastructure demands, and create a lighter environmental footprint in many other ways. But many of us no longer enjoy the freedom of visiting a downtown office store for an ink cartridge or walking to the corner grocer or baker for a loaf of bread.

The displacement of neighborhood-serving businesses by large regional stores often forces us to spend time and money to [drive many miles](#) for items or services we once could access in or near our own neighborhoods. Since 1969, shopping-related driving per household has more than tripled



Many Independent Business Alliances employ loyalty and gift cards to build group marketing power.

to nearly 3200 miles annually in the U.S. -- dwarfing other factors in leading to a 63 percent overall increase in miles driven, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

With high gas prices, this forced driving not only increases environmental impacts and takes valuable time, but also costs us more money -- both when we fill our tanks and pay local taxes for roads and traffic control.

III. Delivering Your Message for Maximum Impact

Tell Stories

Educating your community about the many objective benefits of doing business locally is critical, but effective persuasion involves appealing both to your audience's emotions and their intellect. And stories trump data almost every time.

Personalize the cause by showing people the faces and stories of your local business owners. Collect and publicize anecdotes

Accountability and Charity

Local business owners consider their impact on the community's quality of life and often take actions because they believe the right thing to do, even if it does not maximize profit. Local owners are identifiable, accessible and accountable.

it's the right thing to do, even if it does not maximize profit. Local owners are identifiable, accessible and accountable.

Talk to people about the importance of patronizing the businesses who support their child's soccer team, favorite theater group, or animal shelter -- especially those who do the purchasing for local organizations! Local business contributions (of time and publicity opportunities, not just cash) are essential to many groups and programs that enhance our quality life.

Quality of Life, Democracy and Civic Engagement

Typically, local independents offer more personal selection, character and service than their corporate competitors. We all spend a significant portion of our

lives patronizing businesses; why not make it the most pleasurable experience possible? The human scale fosters human relationships -- without the need for scripted exchanges.

Communities with a greater concentration of small, locally-owned businesses have healthier populations -- with lower mortality, obesity and diabetes rates -- than do those relying more on large companies with absentee owners, according to a [national study](#) from Louisiana State and Baylor Universities. They also enjoy higher [rates of civic engagement](#) and sustain [higher property values](#).

Our independent businesses and the public spaces surrounding them are key environments for supporting the casual relationships that create community cohesiveness and trust. When personal interactions are replaced by trips to big-box stores or shopping alone online, community bonds are weakened.

"Working for Adami Hardware for 15 years has prepared me to run my own business. Living above the store gives me an intimate connection with my customers and allows me to keep my finger on the pulse of the neighborhood."

GUSTAVO AND SONS

CLINTON HILL HARDWARE
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IN BUSINESS SINCE JANUARY 2006



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Posters like these help make the decision to buy local personal, not just business

about positive experiences people enjoy with them -- especially remarkable ones like stories of the local restaurant owner who offers free meals to families who lost their homes in a fire.

This storytelling can be done through posters featuring individual businesses, letters to the editor, social media posts, video clips on your website, and many other venues.

[*Made to Stick*](#), a book by Chip and Dan Heath, and [*Storyteller Uprising*](#) by Hanson Hosein are great resources on this topic, as are two documentaries produced by Hosein, [“Independent America”](#) and [“Rising from Ruins.”](#)

Check Your Facts

Along with the aforementioned studies quantifying direct local economic benefits of local businesses, additional studies by [Civic Economics](#) have examined indirect and induced impacts, which trace multiple rounds of re-spending. These studies yield larger multipliers, showing up to \$68 of local economic activity ultimately generated for a \$100 purchase at a local independent business (Andersonville, 2004).

This is a totally different calculation for one specific area and does not mean \$68 of a \$100 sale “stays” in the local economy. Since errant claims can spread like wildfire on the web and repeating them can undermine your credibility, verify factual claims with an original source or AMIBA, which provides a [thorough explanation](#) of the multiplier effect. The ILSR hosts an [extensive collection](#) of relevant studies.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Identify your community’s demographics and use framing, imagery and messaging designed specifically for each major group. Messaging about keeping taxes lower and enhancing property values, for example, may succeed for middle-aged homeowners, but young singles respond better to messages emphasizing indie businesses as the place to find items reflecting their own unique tastes and character.

Sure, your logo and primary tagline should aim for broad appeal, but design most outreach materials with a more specific target audience and medium in mind. Learn from the best marketers: You’ll see Nike’s logo and slogan everywhere, but you’d never mistake its image ads in *Golfer’s Digest* with one in *Skateboarder*. Failing to identify and cater to interests and values of specific groups may be the most common failing of buy local efforts. Customize!

Master the Arguments

Everyone involved in your campaign should develop a strong “elevator pitch” on most of the pro-local business arguments presented here. To effectively communicate to various individuals and groups on the issues or in the frame that best suits their concerns and interests, your core group should have targeted pitches on a range of topics, though not everyone need master them all.

For example, have a concise explanation for environmental groups or publications on how sustaining local business reduces traffic, storm runoff and fossil fuel consumption while helping protect open space and farmland.

Focus on Improvement, Not Dollar Amounts

Asking people to spend a specific dollar amount with locals is not recommended as a general theme, though it may be useful for specific events like a “cash mob.” Why? Any



Think Big

Leveraging the power of institutional buyers by helping them source even slightly more goods or services locally can yield a large local economic stimulus.

These entities include local and county governments, schools, colleges, hospitals, military and others that, by their nature, are rooted in the community. Build relationships with their buyers and contractors and ask to review budgets and learn which purchases are sourced locally, which aren’t, and the key criteria the decision-maker must follow.

If you can play matchmaker with even a few local providers, you’ll not only have a loyal business member for life, you’ve created a great story to advance your message in the media.

Contact (AMIBA) for a [sample survey](#) and see [“Leveraging Anchor Institutions for Local Job Creation and Wealth Building,”](#) a report by [Community Wealth](#).

GRACIAS por escoger nuestros NEGOCIOS LOCALES INDEPENDIENTES

Al hacer negocios localmente, usted no sólo obtiene servicio personalizado y valor verdadero, también ayuda a fortalecer su comunidad y la economía local.



American Independent Business Alliance | www.AMIBA.net

Spanish window decals (also in English) available from AMIBA: "Thank You For Choosing Our Independent Local Businesses. By doing business locally, you not only get personal service and real value, you also help strengthen our community and economy." Click image for additional pro-local merchandise.

dollar amount chosen will be either unrealistic for residents struggling to get by or inconsequential for wealthy residents.

Whatever one's present spending habits, ask them to do a bit more with independent local businesses (and then a bit more next year). The "10% Shift" is one simple, non-threatening theme employed by many groups to convey that message.

IV. Beyond "Buy Local": Building Strength in Numbers

While a well-run buy local campaign can create positive movement in your community, stopping there would be like using only two cylinders of a four-cylinder engine – you'll move, but not nearly as rapidly as you could. While this primer focuses primarily on elements of effective public education, organizations delivering the greatest benefit to their members partake in three major realms of activity:

1. Execute "buy local" campaigns that shift consumer, business and institutional spending.
2. Facilitate Collaboration. Cooperative promotion, advertising, purchasing,

Consider using local sales tax data to calculate the huge economic and job-creation boost your city or town would enjoy from such a shift.

Combine In-depth Education with Constant Reminders

Plan to generate feature stories, talk radio spots, newspaper commentaries and presentations that allow you to tell your stories and thoroughly explain the economic, civic and environmental importance of local business. AMIBA can provide templates for each of these.

Simultaneously, your campaign should be so conspicuous that residents rarely will pass a day without experiencing your message. Visible materials like window decals, posters, tote bags, and bag stuffers bearing it are one component. The other key is convincing participating businesses that using your logo and messaging in their own ads, website,

sharing of skills and resources, mutual financing initiatives and other activities help small businesses gain economies of scale and compete successfully.

3. Create a strong, uncompromised voice for independent business in local government and media while engaging citizens in guiding their community's future.

A bit more on the latter two realms:

Facilitate Collaboration to Help Indies Compete

The line between public education campaigns and facilitating

invoices and elsewhere will boost the campaign's power and benefit them. These everyday sightings will recall the deeper messages and help them sink in. Working personally with a few landmark businesses to get their buy-in will help build participation rapidly.

Education Never Stops

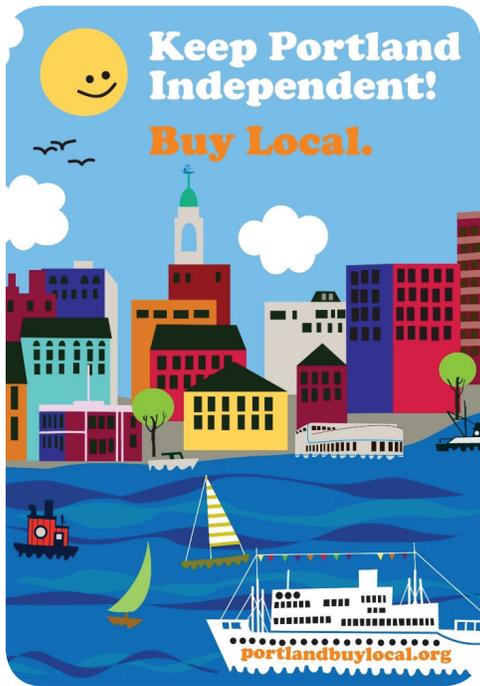
Shifting local culture will take some time and, unlike teaching a lesson, you will never be done. Even if your community has little population turnover, effective education and consciousness-raising is a perpetual process. Constantly seek new ways to engage people and deliver your core message in difference packages.

The number of effective tools and templates available is expanding rapidly as the ranks of Independent Business Alliances grows, accelerated by increased interest in creating more stable and sustainable economies.



The Corvallis (OR) independent Business Alliance delivers their message to the community personally

collaborative efforts among your member businesses should get blurry if done right. Custom-created bookmarks, shopping



Portland Buy Local (Maine) posters, shirts and other items keep the message visible daily.

bags, carry-out containers and other items can deliver your public education messages and build your collective brand while also cutting costs for members and boosting their profile.

Designing an effective logo for shared use to help build a collective brand is a large topic itself, but developing universal recognition of your group logo as a symbol of top-quality independent businesses is a major goal. This is accomplished largely through member businesses displaying the logo in their own ads, websites, brochures, etc.

In addition, sharing of skills, business-to-business mentoring and other collaboration has helped many groups. Such activities also can occur within other business groups, though the community participation typical of an Independent Business Alliance may open up additional opportunities. Creating a culture of mutual support among local

businesses eventually will lead to joint purchasing and cross-promotion ideas that don't require your direct involvement at all. When members start doing this without you, you're doing a great job of leading!

Create a Voice for Independents and Engage Citizens

Proposing pro-local business policies can be a powerful educational tool and organization-building exercise while generating concrete benefits for local entrepreneurs. Enacting local purchasing and contracting preferences is perhaps the most widely successful among a large toolbox of policy options (ILSR hosts an [online library](#) of model

policies and case studies). Though proactive relationship building is the preferred route with local governments, defending independents from harm sometimes is necessary. When the City of Austin, Texas was prepared to give a \$2.1 million taxpayer subsidy that would largely benefit a proposed Borders Books and Music outlet -- within a block of established independents BookPeople and Waterloo Records -- those store owners sprang into action with the Austin Independent Business Alliance.

They first commissioned an economic impact study by [Civic Economics](#), which showed that each \$100 spent at those local retailers directly generated \$45 in

Seasonal Campaigns

While education is a year-round process, annual events offer a great opportunity to build awareness at key times. Below are the three most prominent campaigns in the U.S. and Canada.

Small Business Saturday is a national initiative to help small merchants compete during the critical holiday shopping season and aims to drive shoppers to local small merchants the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Tens of millions of Americans shopped small on Small Business Saturday in 2012, while more than 350 small business organizations endorsed the initiative, as well as elected officials in all 50 states and Washington D.C. - including President Obama. See www.shopsmall.com



Independents Week, the first week of July, connects "going local" with the American ideals of independence and the freedom to control one's own livelihood. It celebrates entrepreneurial spirit, individuality, and recognizes the critical contributions of independent business. This AMIBA-facilitated event offers a wide range of activities and design templates free for anyone to use or adapt. See AMIBA.net/indieweek



Shift Your Shopping is a joint effort through the holiday season led by the [New England Local Economy Network](#), [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#) and [AMIBA](#). It aims to build an annual tradition that strengthens local economies, expands employment, nurtures a sense of community, and provides a more relaxed, fun, and rewarding gift-buying experience. See ShiftYourShopping.org





Get Business Owners to Walk the Talk

That goal of getting locals to self-identify as supporters of local independents? It's doubly important to develop it among business owners themselves. As local owners recognize how independent businesses within a community also are interdependent, it can create a powerful positive feedback loop that drives further cooperation.

Business-to-business spending is economically significant, and it's critical to the integrity of your campaign for member businesses to localize their purchasing where feasible. As with major institutions, ask your business members to analyze where their spending goes, and see if your group can facilitate sourcing additional goods or services locally. Above all, make sure your campaign sources locally!

local economic activity while the same amount spent at Borders would yield just \$13. The Austin IBA used the study results to rally public opposition and stopped the subsidy completely. The chain then declined to compete against the two well-run independent merchants under free market conditions!

The Austin IBA went on to partner with the City on a program to identify and enhance unique business districts and has partnered with developers to help them find local entrepreneurs who can fulfill the increased demand for unique local shops and restaurants in commercial spaces. Now nearly 650 members strong, the IBA has earned respect that gives

it influence over policy decisions affecting independent businesses before they're made.

IBAs increasingly are being welcomed by municipal governments, and many have provided essential start-up support as word of their positive economic impact spreads.

Enhancing Media Presence

Local business owners who lack paid lobbyists or PR people can benefit greatly by your building a strong collective voice to represent their concerns. Making your group local media's "go-to" source for the indie business perspective can pay big dividends. Focus on building long-term media relationships and becoming a reliable resource for local reporters.

V. Organizational Structure and Partnerships

Is the community better served by an existing organization hosting a buy local campaign or by setting up an entity dedicated to fulfilling that role? There's no pat answer, but many communities have IBAs, Main Street programs, chambers and others operating side by side.

While downtown organizations or Main Street programs are great campaign partners, their mission is geographically-determined, and

they are not typically able to lead community-wide campaigns. And because chambers of commerce typically serve any business wishing to join, they rarely will express a preference toward locally-owned, independent businesses.

Do, however, communicate to ensure your work complements, rather than duplicates theirs in other realms – and seek partnering opportunities.

Most groups supporting buy local campaigns should incorporate as non-profits in their state and eventually become 501c6 organizations (an IRS designation). Contact AMIBA for free guidance before incorporating and learn about their 501c6 [group exemption program](#) that saves much time and costly IRS filing fees.

VI. Get Started!

Start conversations with your neighbors, local business owners, and elected officials to gauge interest in launching a buy local campaign. Once you've identified a diverse group of interested people, a few short-term steps include:

- Call AMIBA to learn if others in your area have expressed interest — you may have ready allies!
- Adapt a template to produce a simple flier or brochure with a concise pitch for your vision and be sure everyone in your core group delivers a consistent message.
- Show examples of marketing and education materials to help "make it real." AMIBA offers a portfolio with many examples, as well as pre-printed posters,

Educating Current and Potential Customers on Your Own

While no single business can shift local culture and behavior like a community alliance, many tools are available to help you start influencing your direct audience. Your effort may even attract interest from others and lead to a broader campaign. Simple steps you can take include:

- Talk to other indie businesses in your area about how you can highlight their offerings and drive customers to each other.
- Make sure your employees can and do refer fellow independent businesses when customers ask for recommendations.
- Include pro-local messaging in your ads, on cash register receipts, invoices, social media outlets, website, etc. AMIBA provides free templates, such as bag and billing statement-stuffers (8 different messages in English or Spanish) -- also available as “stickers” for your website or e-newsletters.
- Display pro-local educational materials in your store. See AMIBA’s “Why Buy Local?” poster series or window decals, or create your own materials.
- Submit a commentary to your local newspaper by customizing and localizing a free template from AMIBA.
- Talk to your local radio station about airing a public service announcement (available from AMIBA on request) or see if they’ll record a localized version.



decals and kits for sale and free templates you can print yourself.

- Arrange a community presentation and training to launch your organization. With proper publicity, bringing in an outside expert can attract many potential allies who ordinarily may not attend meetings. Hearing and seeing success stories from similarly-situated communities surrounded by dozens of other locals who share common interests invariably sparks energy.
- Supplement a presentation with a participatory workshop to turn that energy into concrete action promptly and help a group develop a sound foundation. Guidance for making key organizational decisions wisely and quickly can avoid many energy-draining meetings and mistakes and move directly to planning actions. Many groups succeed in getting local universities, governments, or banks, among others to cover the cost of these events.

We understand you likely have a long list of responsibilities and stretched resources, but this may be the most fertile time in generations to initiate a campaign or local alliance that can give a major boost to your community. Properly crafted, your campaign can harness positive activity to strengthen your local businesses and your community for years to come.

For almost any step you can imagine, AMIBA has proven templates, tools and expertise to help you. Tap the benefit of unrivaled experience gained from working with more than one hundred campaigns to determine the most appealing approaches, language and imagery for specific target audiences. Don’t waste time and money reinventing what’s been developed and organized to make your work easier, more profitable and more effective!



A collective name and logo play a key role in building public awareness. Keep logos simple!

AMIBA is a non-profit (501c3) network of, by and for business groups around the continent that work to help independent businesses thrive. These include independent trade associations, Main Street and downtown programs, Independent Business Alliances and chambers that wish to develop pro-local initiatives. Most members receive support from AMIBA to get started.

While [comprehensive benefits](#) are provided to affiliated groups, AMIBA provides many free resources and can help you with initial organizing steps at no cost. A [free monthly newsletter](#) introduces new resources, shares successful initiatives from across the continent and more.

[AMIBA.net/golocal](#) includes links to key resources noted in this primer.

Contact AMIBA for bulk copies of this publication as a full-color magazine or for information on underwriting presently available for community presentations and trainings.



“Come in We’re Local” window decals are [available from AMIBA](#). The inward-facing side guides customers to [ten great reasons](#) for doing business locally.

Note: “Come In We’re Local” is a service mark of AMIBA and may not be used without written permission.



About the Author

[Jeff Milchen](#) co-founded and directed the nation’s first Independent Business Alliance in Boulder, Colorado) in 1998 before going on to help other communities replicate and build on its success in 2001 by co-founding AMIBA.



Milchen has led trainings for many of the most successful campaigns in existence, and his presentations for conferences and trade shows consistently spark participants to action and draw repeat invitations.

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