

Consumerism

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It is no secret that consumerism is a major part of people's daily lives. With the significant proliferation of online shopping, big box stores and mega-corporations firmly embedded within our everyday lives, continued support of local businesses must continue, as they remain a vital component and the backbone of the community. Applying the Rotary 4-Way Test, the fact that supporting local businesses results in a positive outcome, will be proven.

Small businesses make up the majority of all business operations in Canada. In fact, of the 11.9 million working Canadians, 69.7% were employed by small businesses in 2017. By shopping local, and supporting small businesses, you are directly contributing to the livelihood and enrichment of your neighbours. Local Chambers of Commerce are direct participants in local government, and the success of those individuals begets leaders, who eventually become interested in government. An educated population, lead by engaged and community minded individuals who are held accountable by their businesses, can often mean a marked improvement in the success of the community.

Supporting and contributing to local businesses results in fairness, it is not an unjustifiable choice. Small businesses create a more eco-friendlier environment, benefiting not only their city but the entire world. These businesses flourish through the remodeling of old buildings and the revitalization of downtown areas. Ultimately, this establishment situation promotes the reduction of waste and environmental damage that comes with new building projects. Moreover, larger retailers require more maintenance as opposed to local organizations.

Local businesses need fewer public services from the city. These small businesses take advantage of the existing infrastructure to function. Refurbishing established structures has much less of an environmental impact than clearing out new land to make new buildings. Furthermore, local businesses pay local taxes which benefit the entirety of the city. When they pay these taxes, it is advantageous to the city in terms of road improvements, building renovations, green spaces and much more. As individuals spend their money locally, it not only influences their community positively but also their own lives.

There are few activities more rewarding than interacting with a small business owner in your community. The pride of ownership and care taken with each and every patron not only builds a strong relationship, and a repeat customer, but it also deepens the ties that both the local consumer and the local retailer have within the community. Further, the promotion of local business, through advertising and more importantly, sponsorship, has a multiplying effect on the community. The promotion of youth and adult sports, support for the arts, and participation in extracurricular activities by all ages, improves the overall morale of a community. Additionally, it has been shown that a significantly greater portion of the dollars spent at a local retailer remain in the community, compared to shopping at a chain retailer. The relationships that are built at farmers markets, at local artisan shows, further binds each participant to their community. By meeting, and eventually knowing who is behind our local success stories, the community strengthens and grows in a positive manner, together. Witnessing and participating in the success of local business gives each resident a sense of pride and ownership, something that is rarely possible with an online retailer or multinational corporation. Local retailers are able to adjust and tweak their product and service offerings based on the personal interactions they have with their

patrons, and as active members in the community, they can make these changes in a much more nimble fashion.

The advocacy with regards to local businesses is undoubtedly beneficial to everyone concerned. These businesses promote local jobs and entrepreneurship within their community. Small businesses are job creators and allow their employees to work closer to home rather than commuting to a job further away. These employees see the benefits of local businesses which encourages them and the people they know to shop at other local organizations. Additionally, witnessing the successes of a local businesses can fuel the initiative of another person to start their own business creating more opportunities and prosperity in their community. Further, localized businesses will often support other local businesses. This creates valuable relationships between the businesses along with socio-economic advantages to the local people.

With the use of Rotary 4-Way Test, the idea that local businesses lead to a positive outcome was demonstrated. The truthfulness of this statement attests to the fact that supporting local businesses is fair to all, builds better friendships and provides benefits to the community.
