

Use Your Small-business Advantages

When asked if they have any advantages as a small business, many owners respond negatively. If small-business owners perceive they do have an advantage, it typically is about knowing their audience.

The fact is, small-business owners, especially those in rural areas and small towns, have many advantages they can use to enhance the success of their store.

“Knowing the audience is a huge advantage,” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “Yet they often do not make full use of this close audience connection.”

Knowing the audience allows an owner to more completely understand the problems his or her client is having. It also should help develop brand advocates. They are people who, via words and actions, sell your store, products and services for you. They do this because of the trust that can be developed in such close relationships.

“Local owners also can be very responsive to special needs,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). “If the owner does not have an item a customer needs, the fix often can be found by checking with suppliers and using the myriad fast delivery opportunities that exist.”

“As business owners have noted, knowing their local audience allows targeting specific groups to keep them informed when products become available that you, the owner, know this person is interested in,” adds (Insert last name). “What a marketing opportunity.”

Another advantage of the local business owner is the ability to be nimble. Market changes and trends are easier to spot. With the ability to shift product mix quickly, the local business owner can lead the big retailer in being prepared to meet new demands.

The ability to be nimble comes from another advantage, that of having local decision makers. Seeing a trend and taking advantage of it requires someone on the scene who can execute a decision. The owner/manager has the freedom to make those decisions.

“Local community involvement is a major opportunity for the small-business owner,” says Muske. “Yes, they have a business to run, but often it is the local business people who are involved at the heart of various civic and charitable organizations. Money and donations are important, but they often give of their time.”

Such civic and leadership involvement helps more deeply entrench the perceived value of the business, thus strengthening its brand.

Being successful as a small-business owner is a challenge. Small-business owners face a variety of competition and each has certain advantages.

Yet being a small-business owner brings a set of advantages that creates real strength and opportunity. Put them in your toolbox and make full use of them in your business.

For more information on operating and managing your small business, contact your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and email address]. Also visit NDSU's small-business support website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Or check out Facebook at www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz or Twitter at @gmuske.

Other resources include <http://powerofbusiness.net> and www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship. The Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and SCORE, also can be valuable resources.

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For more information, contact glenn.muske@ndsu.edu or call (701) 328-9718. You also can visit our website, www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness.