

Giving to Community Brings Small Business Success

In many communities, the small-business owner is the cornerstone of support for various charitable functions and events.

Small-business owners don't just provide dollars, products and services; they often take on leadership and volunteer roles that allow the community to maintain itself and grow.

"The support of small-business owners to their community should be applauded," says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). "Their support is crucial in keeping community activities and programs going."

Communities aren't the only ones that benefit from such support, though. Community support can be an effective marketing tool for the small business.

"Developing an effective community giving program does not happen automatically, however," says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service's rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. "An effective program is part of an overall marketing plan and done for a reason."

Business owners often don't think much about their gifts. This attitude comes from a mindset of "giving back." It is based somewhat on expectations of mutual support between two groups: the community and the business.

"This idea of giving is appreciated and acknowledged by a community," says Muske. "However, a more effective means requires a change in philosophy to one of choosing to give, or generosity with no expectation of return."

This alternative form of giving demonstrates the commitment of the business to the community. It occurs in individual giving as well. Some people have labeled it "relentless generosity." More quickly the giver is perceived as wanting to be a part of what is being built.

Either form of giving builds a community relationship. Both help make connections and become part of the brand for the business. Yet the latter has shown to develop a deeper and stronger inter-relationship more quickly.

As you develop your small-business marketing plan, strategically think about your giving efforts of time, goods, services and money. Know the "why" for what you do and understand the potential outcomes.

For more information on marketing for 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. Another online resource is www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship.

You also can get help from your local chamber of commerce, as well as the Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and Service Corps of Retired Executives.

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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.