

LAUREL'S LEADS

Small Ways to Make Small Business Saturday a Big Success

Small Business Saturday is a shout-out to the mom-and-pop shops that make up the bulk of the businesses in this country. Started last Thanksgiving by American Express, Small Business Saturday falls on November 26—between Black Friday and Cyber Monday. This is your chance to show shoppers that bigger isn't necessarily better, and that shopping in-store can be more compelling than buying online. Here are a few small things you can do to reap huge rewards.

- **Send customers and contacts an invitation to a screening** (or reading or performance) of the ballet *The Little Mermaid*. *The Little Mermaid* was first danced onscreen in 1952, as part of the film *Hans Christian Andersen*. If you show it, award a little prize to the first person who knows that fact.
- **Hold small yoga classes in your store to support local instructors.** Limit each session to four students. If you want to get more customers involved, make the classes short, as well—15 or 20 minutes. If you've got the space, put them in front of your window—you'll attract attention and bring in more people.
- **Shopping locally means that 68 cents of every dollar spent at a neighborhood store stays in the community**, so give a prize to the 68th person who comes through your door. This is worth the full star treatment, so pour champagne (or sparkling cider for young customers) and take lots of photos.
- **Entertain children with a reading of the E.B. White classic *Stuart Little***, about the tiny mouse with the large message. Or show them the film while Mom shops. You can also do the reverse, and stage short skits with the little guys and gals to entertain parents.
- **On November 26 make a small change to your hours.** Better serve your shoppers and maximize the day's potential by opening early, staying late, or both.
- **If your store is located where parking is a problem**, offer customers small change to feed the meter.
- **If you want people to think about your store as a destination**, serve small bites on small plates. Go healthy with snacks such as carrot sticks and bell pepper strips. More sinfully, set out doughnut holes or two-bite brownies. (Save money by cutting full-size pastries into smaller pieces.) In the late afternoon or evening, bring out the wine. Serve small pours, similar to a tasting. If you can, this is a good time to partner with a wine dealer. Be sure to check local liquor laws first.

Document the day's events with photos, videos and online posts. Write about it on your website, and describe it in your e-newsletter. Send your pictures and a brief press release to local news outlets. Make your story so compelling that those who missed it this year will be first in the door next year. See the day as an opportunity to show that your store might be small, but you stand tall.

To learn more about Small Business Saturday visit www.smallbusinesssaturday.com.

Laurel Tielis is the founder of Laurel Tielis and Associates, a retail consulting firm. She has over 15 years of retail experience, most recently serving as a marketing and public relations consultant for small businesses.



Got a marketing question for Laurel?
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