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Creating a Vibrant Sustainable Local Economy Conference

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Utilizing the Local First Brand: Creative and Cost-Effective Marketing for Your Locally Owned Business

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- Brief introduction to the session and presenters
 - I will give an overview of the environment in which independent, locally owned businesses are operating, the role marketing plays in their success and what SBNP and the Local First campaign are trying to do
 - Rich Bruer will talk to the need for branding your business in order to make marketing activities effective
 - Michael Tevlin will talk about how to then implement a community relations strategy utilizing both your brand and the Local First brand
 - An open discussion between all attendees on questions, ideas, things being done by attendees, potential joint activities, etc.
- Major trends presenting challenges for independent, locally owned businesses
 - Globalization of markets, large chains with “standard format” offerings, public investment markets require constant growth to increase share value
 - “Consumers” encouraged to focus on low prices over all other considerations and to have a “throw-away” mentality that accepts low-quality goods
 - Movement toward on-line shopping with delivery
- Counter trends presenting opportunities for independent, locally owned businesses (and which align with the values of SBNP member companies)
 - Preference for “local” foods, products, services and businesses, especially when seen to strengthen the local community economically and make it more enjoyable to live in
 - Preference for “sustainable/green” foods, products, services and businesses by a growing segment of the population that wants to support their values when spending their money
- The purpose of SBNP, BALLE and the Local First Campaign
 - The Sustainable Business Network of Portland works to pool the

strength and expertise of member businesses to help independent, locally owned businesses succeed and integrate sustainable business practices

- The Local First marketing campaign is designed to raise awareness of the positive role that independent, locally owned businesses play in creating sustainable local economies and livable local communities, thereby creating a preference for businesses associated with the Local First brand.
 - Local First is designed to help locally owned businesses compete against national chains and online shopping
 - The combined efforts of SBNP and all member businesses will enable the Local First campaign to rival the visibility created by local marketing campaigns by well financed national chains
 - SBNP will provide members with a distinctive logo, window stickers to identify member businesses, a website with a searchable directory, press activities to support the Local First brand, outreach via both SBNP-created and partner events and co-op advertising opportunities.
- The role of marketing in making your locally owned business successful in this environment
 - Truly sustainable businesses need to have identified one or more target market segments that truly want/need the products/services being offered
 - The business needs to differentiate itself from competitive offerings and other alternatives that meet the target customers' needs
 - The business must create visibility for its products/services and an impetus to act (purchase)
 - This leads to what Rich and Michael will discuss.
 - Rich's discussion on branding speaks directly to creating differentiation.
 - Michael's discussion about marketing and community relations activities speaks to using your brand, and the Local First brand, in creating visibility for your product/services.

Branding Your Business & Leveraging the “Local First” Brand

Rich Bruer, Marketing Consultant, rich@rbruer.com

- Two good reasons to pay attention to your brand
 - Like it or not, all companies and products have brands
 - The question is whether it's managed by you or *mis*managed by your marketplace, including your competitors
 - An actively managed brand creates brand equity in the form of
 - increased customer awareness, preference and loyalty

- A brand must work on 2 levels
 - It must be distinctive
 - A me-too identity is an invitation to mediocrity
 - It must be relevant
 - If it doesn't matter to your customers, you'd better start over

- Of course, this implies...
 - You know who your competitors are and how you can distinguish your business
 - You know who your customers are and what is most important to them
 - The relevant distinction that you choose for your brand is based on something that your business can really deliver (and something that your primary competitors can't)

- Components of "a brand vision" answer four questions
 - What should your brand become?
 - What is the benefit that will be of greatest significance to your customers?
 - Who should your brand become?
 - What is the voice or personality of the brand expressed in human terms?
 - What is your essential, over-arching promise to your customers?
 - What will your brand stand for?
 - What are the assets or proof points that you can use to bring credibility or ownership to your brand vision?

- The answers to each of these are as unique as each of your businesses
 - They will be based on your unique customer base, history, culture, qualities, personality and geographical reach
 - The point is to understand and communicate what you know is unique to you and what you know matters most to your customers

- However, each of your brands does have at least two things in common
 - You are private, independent, locally owned businesses
 - Your competitors include publicly owned businesses that are national or international in scope with one or more outlets in Portland

- You probably also share a commitment to sustainable business practices, local sourcing and other values contained in the Sustainable Business Network pledge

- SBNP does not advocate that "Local First" becomes your brand or even a sub-brand. But we strongly encourage you to leverage it within your brand.
 - Being an independent and locally owned business is a key differentiator vs. the chain retailers and service providers

- You can offer customer benefits the big guys don't:
 - Personalized service (the Cheers effect: "where everybody knows your name")
 - Consistent experience through stable ownership, management and staff
 - Customers know their money stays in the community
 - Can you think of other customer benefits in being a locally owned business?
- Today's takeaways
 - Develop and manage your brand
 - And as you do, think about how to leverage "Local First"

Leveraging Local First in your marketing and public relations efforts

Michael Tevlin, President, Tevlin Strategic Communication
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Introduction

*There is a strong connection between public relations and your brand. In fact, the two are almost inseparable.

- Your brand is what you stand for in the marketplace.
- Public relations is about building your reputation and relationships. Or to put it another way: It's about what you stand for.

*But public relations is about more than your reputation in the marketplace. Public relations is also about your role as a community member.

*Public relations is about more than news releases. It's about getting your name and brand recognized in the community by being involved in the community. It's about living your brand and getting recognition for that.

First, some obvious things:

Branding and Messaging

- Use the Local First campaign brand identity and messaging consistently in all of your communications and promotions.
- Web site, advertising, brochures, signage, in-store displays, trade show exhibits, news releases, customer communications.

Storytelling

- Tell your story. Consumers – especially the kind of consumers who are inclined to shop locally – want to know your story. They want to vote with their dollars. They want to feel good about where they spend. So give them a reason to feel good about what you do.
- What is your story?
- Your story is about much more than what you sell - *It is about who you are, how you conduct your business, why you are in business.*

- Do you ...
 - Have a long-standing family commitment to serving the community?
 - Have a well-articulated mission or reason for being in business?
 - Purchase and source locally?
 - Employ sustainable business practices?
 - Use enlightened employment practices?
 - Hire locally?
 - Feature the work of local artists, designers, craftspeople?
 - Support local non-profits?
 - Most importantly, your story is not about things. It's about people.
- That's your story. Live it. Tell it. Make sure you let your customers and community know it.

- How do you tell your story?
 - Publicity.
 - Promotions.
 - Programs.
 - In interactions with your customers, vendors, etc.

Publicity

- Get your story in the news: news releases, feature ideas, letters to the editor
- Newsworthiness: Timely, Close (local!), Important (e.g., impact, effect, hooked to larger trends), Unusual/Fascinating (e.g., personality, event)
- If you're local, go local. Local news vs. Oregonian, TV, radio. Get to know your local community newspaper.
- Get to know local niche publications that cover your customer base.
- If local means Portland or Oregon as a whole, you still have a local story to tell.
- If you're not newsworthy, create news.
- How? Community promotions and programs.

Community Promotions

- Partner with other Local First businesses on special promotions.

- Involve the community by donating a portion of proceeds to a community cause. Pick a cause that aligns with your values and story.
- Promote your local suppliers and vendors. E.g., meet the producers, meet the designers.
- Announce your promotion with a news release, customer mailings, ads, etc.
- Pool your resources for advertising and tie in the Local First connection.

Community Programs

- Partner with local community non-profits and causes. Choose organizations that align with your values and your story.
- Get involved personally and support your employees to get involved with community non-profits.
- Give your customers an opportunity to support the non-profit.
- Give your customers a choice. E.g., Rose City Mortgage donates \$100 of its \$595 fee to one of eight non-profits. It allows its customers to choose any one of the eight, or to suggest their own recipient.
- Promote your involvement with the non-profit through news releases, in-store displays, web site, ads and other customer communications.
- Work with the non-profit to get exposure in their communications.
- Other ways to involve the community and make them feel invested in your business: Local advisory board or consumer panels.