

# What small businesses can do to engage their communities



Community engagement can benefit small businesses in various ways. By engaging with their communities, business owners can build brand awareness and inspire trust among residents. Trust in a brand leads many consumers to share positive word-of-mouth, and it also can inspire brand loyalty, a potentially lucrative benefit that can pay dividends for years to come.

A recent study from Bain and Company found that the average repeat customer spends 67 percent more in months 31 through 36 of their relationship with a business than they do in the first six months of that relationship. That underscores how lucrative a long-term relationship with a customer can be for a business. When paired with reliable products and great customer service, community engagement strategies increase the likelihood that businesses will create a loyal customer base, thus laying the foundation for a successful business that can grow for years to come.

Businesses can engage with their communities in various ways. Many engagement strategies give business owners a chance to communicate directly with their customers, and these interactions can be especially valuable.

• **Participate in local events.** Local events like holiday bazaars and town festivals provide great chances for business owners to communicate directly with new and existing customers. Take advantage of the chance to set up a booth at such events, and make a concerted effort to reach out to consumers who stop by the booth. The customer feedback experts at Apptentive found that 97 percent of consumers are somewhat likely to become more loyal to a company that implements their feedback. Setting



up a booth at a bazaar or festival provides a great chance to solicit feedback that businesses can then implement to retain more customers.

• **Sponsor a local youth sports team.**

Youth sports team sponsorships are a relatively inexpensive way to create brand awareness. The National Alliance for Youth Sports, Inc., reports that sponsorship costs vary from organization to organization, though they may cost as little as \$100 to around \$5,000 for the season. In return for that investment, businesses gain exposure to athletes, athletes' families and friends, volunteers, and countless others who may see players in uniform on game day. When compared to the cost of advertising online, on television or on the radio, youth sports sponsorship provides a great return on investment.

• **Offer your space.** Another way business owners can engage their communities is by offering their spaces for community-based events. For example, business owners with ample parking lots can offer those lots as registration sites for charity 5Ks or other events that can utilize large and open outdoor spaces. This approach addresses a community need and draws a crowd of locals to your establishment, thus increasing the chances they will patronize the business during and after the event.

There is no limit to the ways local businesses can engage their communities.

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