

Introduce the Residents of *Your* Community to Their Deep Economy



Deep Economy refers to the economy that each of us actually lives in — the places we shop, the items we purchase, the impact of these choices — and not the aggregate measures of GDP and productivity that get bandied about anytime economic policy is discussed. We live, work, buy, and trade things in our community and each action we take has an impact on our community. Study after study proves that money spent with locally owned merchants and companies has a much bigger impact on the community. Put simply, money spent with local merchants stays in the community while money spent at chain shops is siphoned off to a home office in another city, state, or country. Consumers are deluged with marketing messages from chain stores touting lower prices, but they often don't hear the other side of the story. They make purchasing decisions without understanding the real costs of what they buy from chain retailers and the benefits that come to them and their community from supporting local businesses. This is why establishing and promoting a local business alliance is crucial to educating consumers and insuring the survival of the locally owned merchants and businesses that give a community its character, its soul.

An independent bookstore's role in the community as a gathering place for friends and families makes it a natural launching pad for a local business alliance. Based on the successful efforts of bookstores in cities and towns around the country, these alliances can change the way consumers think and increase sales for all participating merchants. The following are some suggested steps for getting a local business alliance started in your community.



Gather a List:

Contact your chamber of commerce or city or county board of supervisors to get a list of locally owned and operated businesses in your community.

Form a Steering Committee:

Invite all the local business owners in your community to a launch meeting and select a steering committee to direct the activities of the local business alliance.

Seek Professional Help:

Your regional booksellers association and the national ABA have led the way in establishing local business alliances around the country. Take advantage of the expertise available to you and find out what worked best in other towns. The Business Alliance For Local Living Economies also offers assistance to communities looking to establish an alliance. Visit www.localeconomies.org to learn more about this organization.

Collect the Facts:

To convince your community that living locally matters, you'll need to build your case. There have been a number of studies about the impact of local businesses on a community. A good summary of these studies can be found at www.livingeconomies.org/localfirst/studies/. Better still, apply for a grant from your local economic development commission — most cities and counties have them — and commission a study for your town.

[Continued]

Create a Campaign:

Call it "Live Locally", "Discover Our Deep Economy", "Local First" or whatever you like, but launch a campaign that educates your community on the value of supporting local businesses and promotes the products and services offered by local merchants and suppliers.

Enlist Local Media:

Kick off your living locally campaign with a press release you send to the editors at your local newspaper, and producers at local radio and TV stations. Create a "Listening Locally" program for your local radio station in which residents can call-in and ask local business owners questions about the services they offer or in which local authors appearing in your store can be interviewed prior to their signing. Invite the local TV stations to start a cooking segment featuring locally grown, seasonal produce using recipes from cookbooks carried in your store. Get creative and make the wealth of products and services locally owned businesses contribute to your community a "news" story.

Use the Web to Educate and Connect:

Build a web site that lists all the businesses participating in the local business alliance along with the goods and services they offer. Residents of your community can use it as a reference source when they want to shop locally instead of ordering from an online merchant. Also, create a list serve for all participating businesses so you can easily communicate information pertinent to the entire group and local businesses can support each other by posting requests for products or services. For example, if a local restaurant needs tomatoes, the owner can post the request and local farmers who have tomatoes to sell can get in touch with the restaurant owner.

Consider a Coupon Booklet:

Some alliances include coupon booklets offering discounts on goods and services provided by local merchants as part of the living locally campaign. These booklets are typically sold by the participating merchants and offer savings far in excess of the nominal price of the booklet. You can visit www.thegreenzebra.org for an example of how San Francisco businesses are using a coupon booklet to promote local businesses [and the environment].

Link Localism to the Environment:

Throughout your campaign, make sure you underscore the environmental benefits of living locally. Aside from the health benefits, produce grown and consumed locally doesn't have to travel across the country burning fossil fuels. Local economies are sustainable and help diminish the causes of global warming. Help your community understand this connection.

Promote Books on the Subject:

Many wonderful books on the importance of local economies and the looming environmental crisis that living locally can alleviate are available. Dedicate a table in your store to books such as *The Omnivores Dilemma*; *An Inconvenient Truth*; *Deep Economy*; *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*; *Big Box Swindle*, and other staff favorites on this theme. Independent bookstores can lead the discussion on how communities can reclaim their character and reconnect around their shared history. Books like these are wonderful ways to begin the discussion.



Note: These suggestions reflect the input of Hut Landon from the NCIBA, Steve Costsa from the Point Reyes Station Bookstore, and Ann Bartz from BALLE. Many thanks to each of them for sharing their experience and expertise in launching living locally campaigns.

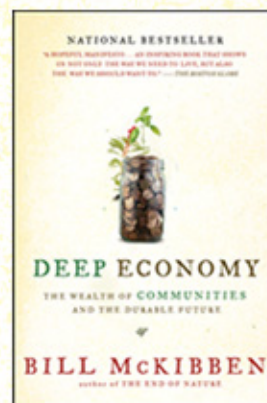
These tips brought to you by:

DEEP ECONOMY

THE WEALTH OF COMMUNITIES
AND THE DURABLE FUTURE

BILL MCKIBBEN
author of *THE END OF NATURE*

www.billmckibben.com



Times Books