



Tom's Message Board



Buy local, it makes cents

I'm a native Vermonter and I love living here! Last month I wrote about the beauty of Lake Champlain; but there's so much more to Vermont than our Green Mountains and postcard-perfect scenes; most notably, the quality of life we enjoy. I travel quite a bit and as I weave my way through the crowded gates of big city airports, I am reminded of how good we have it here.

It's because of this and the sense of community in Vermont that I chose to start my business here. However, as quaint as Vermont is, we share the same connectivity to world commerce as people in New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Mumbai, or London... thanks to the Internet. We need it, we embrace it and we all use it; and with instant access, cheap prices and the convenience of shopping from your computer, it's hard not to play along in the global economy. To compete, we build websites to tell about our products and services and provide links to our sites. We try to be easily accessible and offer the most competitive pricing that we can, but the bottom line is that we can't always compete with the big box stores or the online businesses...and I'm realizing that we shouldn't; for doing so dilutes our value.

While internet shopping and large box stores may afford more choices, and sometimes they are the best choices, they don't offer what Vermont's family-based restaurants, camera shops, music stores, accounting firms, furniture stores, bicycle shops, ski shops, health food stores, microbrewers, hardware stores, and yes... even print shops do...businesses passed on from generation to generation, owners coming into your home to take measurements for new windows, your printer who knows the importance of your fundraising campaign mailing deadline, or a salesperson asking how your vacation was because they know and your family. Imagine the loss in the local flavor of our local commerce without these valuable business relationships.

This having been said, I'll fess up. I do buy online and shop the big box's at times. However, my first option is always to buy from local merchants who are our neighbors, our community and our economic stability. There are times when I spend more for an item I could buy on-line; and though I'm as eager to find the best deal as the next guy, especially in this tough economic time, the difference to me is often not worth risking the impact on my local community; not to mention the added benefit of local service and support. Vermont IS small business and if anything, we need more responsible manufacturing and entrepreneurship to sustain our economy. What we can strive for is balance in this global economy. It can't be a competition any longer. It has to be a choice.

The slogan about Buying Vermont First isn't just marketing hype...it's essential to keeping our local businesses vibrant and to keeping our community strong. So...on your way home today, stop at your local farm stand, grab some fresh produce, settle in with a local microbrew and relish in the thought that you are part of sustaining your local community. Feels good doesn't it?

Tom Brassard
President