

## **Press Kit on Local First Campaigns:**

### **2011 Independent Business Survey by the Institute for Local Self Reliance**

This press kit includes:

1. Press release from the Institute for Local Self Reliance (a good summary of the study) *to adapt to your local needs*
2. Recommendations for crafting and localizing a press release, blog post, or news article
3. Example articles by BALLE member networks:
  - a. Una Winterman of Local First Indiana
  - b. Sarah Bishop of Buffalo First
4. The 2011 Independent Business Survey in the media

**Download the full text of the 2011 Independent Business Survey here:**

<http://www.newrules.org/sites/newrules.org/files/2011-ind-business-survey.pdf>

**Press Kit compiled by [BALLE](#).**

## Survey Finds "Buy Local" Message Benefitting Independent Businesses

By Stacy Mitchell on January 26, 2011

Available at: <http://www.newrules.org/retail/news/survey-finds-buy-local-message-benefitting-independent-businesses>

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MINNEAPOLIS, MN (Jan. 26, 2011)** – For the fourth year in a row, a national survey of independent businesses has found that those in communities with an active "buy local" campaign have experienced markedly stronger revenue growth compared to those located in areas without such a campaign. ([Download the report.](#))

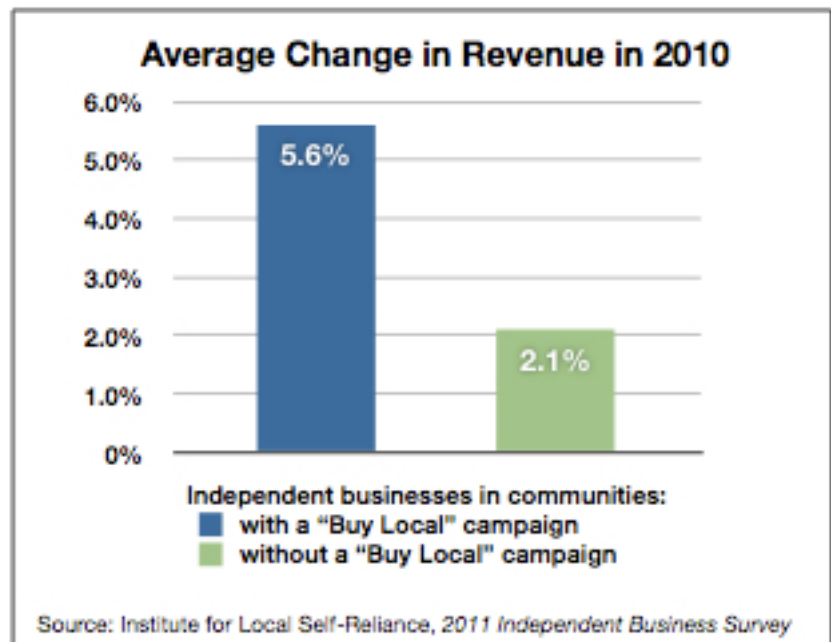
The survey, which was conducted over an 8-day period in January, gathered data from 2,768 independent businesses, including retailers, service providers, restaurants and others. It found that those in places with a "buy local" initiative reported revenue growth of 5.6% on average in 2010, compared to 2.1% for those elsewhere.

Among independent retailers, which accounted for nearly half the respondents, there was a similar gap in holiday sales performance, with those in "buy local" communities seeing a 5.2% increase in holiday sales, while those elsewhere reported an average gain of 0.8%.

"Buy local" campaigns run by Independent Business Alliances and Local First groups are now underway in about 140 cities nationwide.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents said that public awareness of the benefits of supporting locally owned businesses had increased in the last year, while 24% said it had stayed the same and only 3% said it had decreased.

Business owners in cities with active "buy local" campaigns reported a wide range of positive impacts on their business. Almost half reported that the campaign had brought new customers to their business and 55% said it had made existing customers more loyal. More than two-thirds



said local media coverage of independent businesses had increased and 51% said that local government officials were now more aware and supportive of the needs of independent businesses.

Comments from survey participants highlighted key challenges facing independent businesses, including the weak economy and government policies that often favor their large competitors. Yet businesses active in "buy local" initiatives repeatedly cited these efforts as making a difference in their survival and success. "It is abundantly clear to me that a greater percentage of the public is attuned to the value of supporting local independents compared to just a couple years ago," noted one Arizona business owner. \

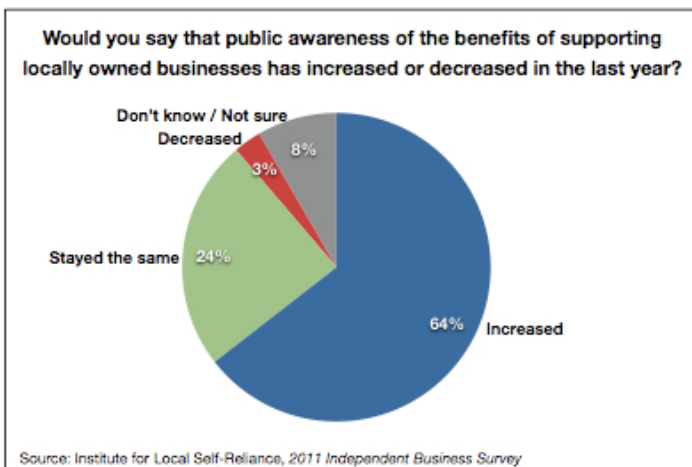
The survey was conducted by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a nonprofit research and educational organization, in partnership with dozens of national and local business organizations, including the American Booksellers Association, Alliance of Independent Media Stores, American Independent Business Alliance, American Specialty Toy Retailing Association, Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, National Bicycle Dealers Association, and TriMega Purchasing Association.

Complete results may be downloaded [here](#).

[Similar surveys over the last three years](#) likewise found that independent businesses in cities with active "buy local" campaigns reported stronger sales gains than those in communities without such initiatives.

"This survey adds to the growing body of evidence that people are increasingly seeking out independent businesses and that shift is having a tangible impact on the bottom line," said Stacy Mitchell, senior researcher with the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#).

"For the fourth year in a row, independent retailers in communities with active 'shop local' campaigns have shown stronger sales than retailers in communities without such campaigns," said [American Booksellers Association](#) CEO Oren Teicher. "More and more shoppers are voting in favor of independent retailers with their spending, proving that they recognize that bigger is not always better — and making clear that they value a strong, unique, and vibrant community. The potential for locally owned businesses committed to working together could not be greater."



"This survey offers further proof that, with sustained efforts, communities can indeed raise local consciousness and build a culture of support for local entrepreneurs," said Jennifer Rockne, executive director of the [American Independent Business Alliance](#).

"Remarkably, most of the campaigns operated by Independent Business Alliances are funded by businesses paying \$20 or less per month in dues. They're getting quite a return on their investment."

“We are encouraged by the positive impact, as well as the positive change in consumer behavior our members are seeing as a result of ‘Buy Local’ campaigns,” said Michael Morris, vice president of marketing for [TriMega Purchasing Association](#), a national buying consortium of independent office supply dealerships. “Our dealers have reported improved customer loyalty, increased awareness of their brand, and more doors being opened to them thanks to 'think local' oriented initiatives.”

"Independent Business Alliances and 'buy local' campaigns are becoming a basic tool for independent businesses to help differentiate themselves from their big-box and internet competition by highlighting their meaningful connection to the community," said Kathleen McHugh, president of the [American Specialty Toy Retailing Association](#). "Once consumers understand why supporting local business is important to their community, they connect it to why they live where they do."

"Small, local businesses generate the majority of new jobs in the US," said Michelle Long, Executive Director of the [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#). "Buy Local First campaigns help bring these businesses and residents together to build community health and wealth -- from the bottom up."

## Recommendations for crafting a press release, blog post, or news article:

1. Summarize the survey
  - a. Who: 2011 Independent Business Survey
  - b. Who: The Institute for Local Self Reliance, in partnership with the American Booksellers Association, Alliance of Independent Media Stores, American Independent Business Alliance, American Specialty Toy Retailing Association, Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, National Bicycle Dealers Association, and TriMega Purchasing Association.
  - c. Where: <http://www.newrules.org/sites/newrules.org/files/2011-ind-business-survey.pdf>
2. Major talking points:
  - a. Independent businesses show stronger growth in communities with “Buy Local” campaigns than in communities without a campaign.
  - b. Independent businesses in communities with “Buy Local” campaigns showed stronger holiday sales than those in communities without.
  - c. Respondents indicate that the public has become more aware of the benefits of shopping at locally owned businesses.
  - d. Business owners reported that local media have increased their coverage of independent businesses and local governments have become more aware of the need to support locally owned businesses.
3. Localize the results:
  - a. Quote local business members: Are their sales growing? Do they attribute some of this growth to your campaign? What are customers saying about the campaign or the benefits for Thinking Local First? Did they take the survey?
  - b. Mention your holiday campaign, 10% shift campaign, and ongoing Local First efforts
  - c. Include photographs of local businesses who participated in the survey or in your campaign
4. Include charts and images from the study
5. Share your post or article via social media

## National Survey on Independent Business Shows Sales Way Up for Cities with Buy Local Organizations

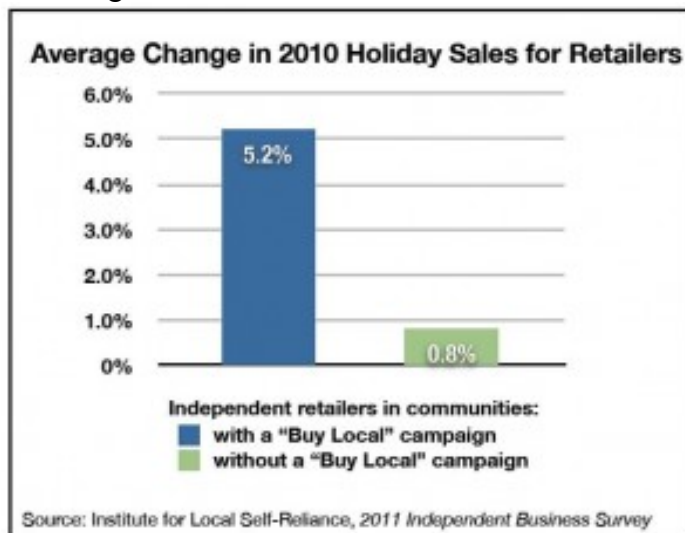
Story by Una Winterman, Founder, Local First Indiana

Available at: <http://www.localfirstindiana.org/2011/02/national-survey-on-independent-business-shows-sales-way-up-for-cities-with-buy-local-organizations/>

The National Retail Federation reported a \$4 billion spike in consumer spending at the beginning of the Holiday Season this year, but very few of those goods were actually made in America. NPR reported this discrepancy in a Marketplace story in Nov. 2010, when they talked to Michael Mandel, the editor in chief at Visible Economy, who argued that “holiday spending is largely for things that will worsen the trade deficit, add to our debt overseas and create bigger problems in the future.”

The answer? Shop Local—as local as possible: local food, local goods, and local charities, supporting local jobs, local entrepreneurs, the local economy, and the quality of life we all enjoy in Bloomington. These kinds of businesses often sell items of higher quality that the recipients will keep around their houses a lot longer. All across America, people are doing just that, and there are numbers to show for it!

A National survey conducted by the National Institute for Self Reliance, a nonprofit research and educational organization, demonstrates that having a Buy Local organization makes a big difference in spending habits for the communities they serve. The 2011 Independent Business Survey gathered financial data from 2,768 businesses from across the U.S., including Bloomington.



### Findings:

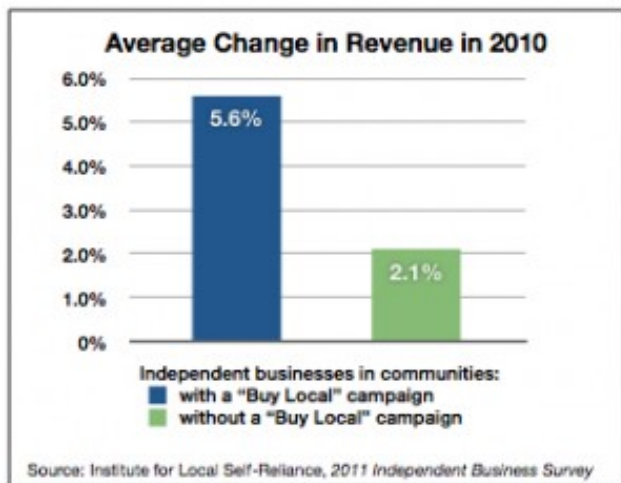
- Places with a “buy local” initiative reported revenue growth of 5.6% on average in 2010, compared to 2.1% for those without one.
- Those in “buy local” communities saw a 5.2% increase in holiday sales, while those elsewhere reported an average gain of 0.8%. This is up considerably since last year, when businesses in “buy local” communities saw a 3% increase, while those without saw only 1%.

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents said that public awareness of the benefits of supporting locally owned businesses had increased in the last year, while 24% said it had stayed the same and only 3% said it had decreased.
- 45% of businesses reported that the campaign had brought new customers to their business
- 55% said the Buy Local Campaign increased the loyalty of existing customers
- 68% said that the campaign led to an increase in local media coverage of independent businesses
- 51% said that the campaign made local government officials more aware and supportive of the needs of independent businesses.
- 49% said it had led to more collaboration, purchasing, and mutual support among local businesses

Over 500 respondents volunteered concerns in the surveys, with three major concerns popping up over and over again:

- The weak economy
- The growth of online shopping
- Government policies that favor their competitors, such as rules exempting large online sellers from having to collect state and local sales taxes, as local retailers must.

Bloomington businesses had the opportunity to participate in the survey as well, though the response rate was not the amount we needed to get the statistics for our area. However, we got some great feedback from some well-loved stores in our city. Michelle Giansante, owner of Melody Music Shop had this to say about their sales over the last year:



“We celebrated our one year anniversary in October of last year, and along with the 2010 holiday season, we couldn’t have asked for a better first year for our shop! We have increased from 12 to over 20 instructors, increased from 50 to over 100 lesson customers, featured 13 concerts on our back deck for over 180 audience members of all ages, rented out over 300 instruments, and did a quarter million in sales, all with taking on no debt! We are so happy to have such support from the community!”

Ruth Conway, from the By Hand Gallery, said that the Holiday Season was good. They have a lot of loyal customers who make a point of buying locally handmade work, and several of them told Ruth and her manager both that they were making conscious decisions to shop locally. “I think that more and more people are now realizing the value of buying local and also buying

the work of people that they know or who they have met. We have always had some of this but it seems to be getting better these days.”

### **Those Who Think With Their Heads and Those Who Know With Their Hearts**

Submission by Sarah Bishop, Executive Director Buffalo First, featured on Buffalo Rising

Available here: <http://www.buffalorising.com/2011/02/those-who-think-with-their-heads-and-those-who-know-with-their-hearts.html>



#### **Those Who Think With Their Heads**

When Adam Smith conceptualized a market economy in his classic *The Wealth of Nations*, he had in mind a system that used human and material resources justly and sustainably to meet the self-defined needs of the people and their respective communities.

Smith's construct is the foundation on which local living economies are based. Although it may seem an idealistic longing, over 140 cities have committed to the establishment of such economies. And, for the fourth consecutive year, Stacy Mitchell, from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, has collected data from thousands of independent businesses (retailers, service providers, restaurants, etc.) to quantify the benefits of a buy local initiative.

Her findings are telling, but not surprising. Independent businesses in U.S. communities with active "buy local" initiatives reported a 5.6 percent increase in sales over the previous year -- the strongest gains since the first year of the survey. This increase was more than double that (2.1 percent) reported by independent businesses located in areas lacking networks.



Moreover, business owners commented on the wide range of positive impacts the campaigns had on their businesses. Nearly half reported that the campaigns brought new customers to their business, and 55% said it had made existing customers more loyal. More than two-thirds of respondents said local media coverage of independent businesses had increased in the past year, and 51% said that local government officials were more aware of, attentive to and supportive of the needs of independent businesses and the entrepreneurs thereof.

### **Those Who Know With Their Hearts**

Valentine's Day tends to evoke more emotion and less analysis, logic, rationality and use of the left brain.

Not to worry.

Back in 2006, Stephen Colbert coined a term for such times as these -- that word, of course, is "truthiness."

Truthiness: truth that comes from the gut, not books.

Listen, Buffalo, you don't need me or anyone else to prove what you already know in regards to living local. Droning on about how thinking local first improves the health of the environment, strengthens our community and contributes to a functional democracy is true, but unnecessary.

You can feel it, even if you can't define it. Reports, reference books and scholarly discourse do little for the war over your pocketbook. What will ultimately resonate and prove an effective weapon in this "war" is the emotional connect -- the "truthiness."

Our quality of life would be incredibly different if we based economic decisions on life values, rather than purely financial ones. Make your decisions based on the core belief that you are part of a human-scale movement charged with the mission to build a new, stronger economy using the principles of justice, sustainability and compassion.

Let February 14 serve as a healthy reminder to exhibit "truthiness" in loving local -- together, we have the ability, power and responsibility to guide our community's future forward.

### **Other Media Coverage of the 2011 Independent Business Survey**

1. “Report: Buy Local Campaigns Help Independent Businesses,” by Zachary Shahan via Reuters, February 4, 2011:  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/04/idUS399914446420110204>
2. “National survey shows benefits of buy local campaigns”, Times-Standard (Eureka, CA), February 4, 2011: [http://www.times-standard.com/business/ci\\_17292059](http://www.times-standard.com/business/ci_17292059)
3. “Getting a boost from ‘Buy Local’ campaigns in Summit County,” by Kathryn Corazzelli for the Summit Daily News (Summit County, CO), February 22, 2011:  
<http://www.summitdaily.com/article/20110222/BUSINESS/110229963/1078&ParentProfile=1055>