

Make the most of Small Business Saturday

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For a manufactured holiday, Small Business Saturday (SBS) is hard to beat. The [shopping holiday](#) was launched by American Express in 2010 in an effort to help [small businesses](#) recover from the [Great Recession](#). Congress jumped on the idea, designating the Saturday following Thanksgiving as National Small Business Saturday in 2011. Since then, spending at small retailers on Small Business Saturday has tripled. Today, 72 percent of U.S. consumers are aware of the holiday, and 81 percent of SBS shoppers [report](#) that they encourage others to support small, independently-owned retailers and restaurants. It doesn't take a lot of effort to make the most of Small Business Saturday.

Update your company's website and social media

A lot of small businesses build a website and then forget about it, or they experiment with social media but don't keep up with it when things get busy. As SBS approaches, take the time to make sure your website is up to date with all the information customers need to find you and use your services. Do this across all the social media channels you use, and if you are going to run any specials or promotions, prepare and schedule appropriate content in advance. Don't forget to update social media throughout the day of the event with the [#SmallBizSat](#) hashtag. (One word of warning: if you allow user-generated content on your social media sites, make sure you understand the [legal issues](#).)

Do take American Express

In the early years of the holiday, American Express offered incentives to cardholders for shopping at small businesses. Amex doesn't offer those consumer incentives anymore, but it does provide businesses with marketing support. Visit their [Shop Small](#) website to have your business added to their Shop Small map and download any of the related marketing materials that make sense for your business.

Get creative with promos

Trying to compete directly with the big stores by offering Black Friday-style discounts

can put you in the red, but do mark SBS with special promotions and events. Be creative; customers will remember free coffee and cookies long after they've forgotten how much a 10 percent-off coupon saved them. Consider donating a portion of the day's sales to charity to maximize the feel-good nature of the day. Create rewards for customers who use social media check-ins and who tag your business in their shopping selfies, since these types of posts can generate more business – remember, friends and family are the most [trusted](#) form of advertising for 83 percent of shoppers.

Give the personal touch

For consumers, the [personal element](#) is part of the appeal of shopping small, so turn it to your advantage. Be ready to provide high quality, personalized customer service on Small Business Saturday (as on every other day), so you can turn those holiday shoppers into loyal, year-round customers.