

# **Actual Results**

## **Joseph Baker**

Small Business Saturday, which was on the Saturday following Thanksgiving, was "a day to support small business owners, help fuel the economy, and invigorate communities across the country." Supported by American Express, this shopping day attracted an estimated 103 million shoppers, and public awareness rose 65% this year, up from just 37% last year. This was largely due to support from 75 corporations, such as Facebook, Google and FedEx; more than 230 small business advocacy groups, public and private organizations; and countless social media users who "Liked" Small Business Saturday or tweeted about it.

"We want to thank all the consumers, public officials, community organizations, chambers of commerce and corporate partners who were part of the movement," Kenneth I. Chenault, Chairman and CEO of American Express, said in a statement, "By supporting small businesses across America, they are helping to create jobs, boost the economy and preserve our neighborhoods."

### **What does this mean for small businesses?**

Simply put, the success of Small Business Saturday shows that American consumers haven't turned their back on small businesses, even with economic worries still weighing heavily on people's minds. Additionally, large corporations, who generally seem to worry about themselves above all else, are willing to pitch in to ensure that their smaller counterparts succeed during the holiday season. This sense of teamwork can only be beneficial to even the smallest of businesses!

Another important point that was made this year is the influence that the Internet, particularly social networking, had over the way that this previously lesser known shopping day was received by consumers. Whether it was all of the likes, tweets, and retweets, or the advertising that was done on various sites, this year's success is largely due in part to this new form of word-of-mouth advertising.

### **How can businesses incorporate trends into their overall strategies?**

In addition to learning how to use the Internet—specifically social networking sites—to your advantage (more on this later), businesses that did the best also ran their own specials. "We more than doubled last year's business and quadrupled what would be a normal Saturday for us," said Maria Baugh, co-owner of New York City-based Butter Lane Cupcakes, which aggressively promoted Small Business Saturday and offered special sales. "You need to run your own special in conjunction with SBS and also really, really promote it in order to get the most out of it. But when you do those things, it can provide a huge boost to your business."

In a world that is increasingly dependent upon the Internet, promotion has become increasingly important. Take, for example, if you are going to take a weekend trip to Chicago. When you are sorting through the various Chicago hotels and attractions, are you more likely to choose venues and hotels that you have heard nothing about, or one that made an impression through effective advertising and/or attention-grabbing promotions? The same holds true for all consumerism: the bigger and better of an impression that you make, the better you will fare with consumers.

## **And what about using the Internet?**

There are many aspects to the Internet that you can learn in order to thrive in this medium. Below are five tips that every small business owner must learn in order to stay competitive:

1. Learn how to use social media! Whether it's a Facebook page that current and future customers can "like", check into, and leave feedback; or a Twitter account that you can post updates and specials upon, social media is here to stay and should be used!
2. Advertising is every bit as effective online as it is in person, maybe even more so. With the changes that are being proposed to the USPS, physical mail is becoming a thing of the past, which means that all of those carefully crafted advertisements you had planned may be ineffectual. Google and Facebook both offer advertising at reasonable rates, and with proper planning, these will reach your target audience far easier than traditional advertising methods.
3. It's a good idea to start a blog, and to monitor blogs that are specifically geared toward shoppers. "Mommy blogs", which are often decried as being frivolous, are an excellent way to keep track of spending trends, and what others are saying about you and your competition.
4. Learn what you can about [SEO](#), and try to implement some of those strategies into your overall business and marketing strategy. Many mistakenly believe that these are unethical and/or ineffective strategies, based mostly on recent demotions of well-known sites by Google, but this is only because said sites were using "black hat" SEO tactics. "White hat" strategies are not only effective, but well-regarded in most marketing circles.
5. While we're on the subject of Google, recent algorithmic updates upset what was once thought to be a pretty set playing field. Companies which were doing very well were demoted overnight, and this worried a lot of companies. Learn everything you can about these updates, and always be sure to provide relevant, well-written, fresh content, and you will do just fine.