



## Small Business Saturday

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M Booth and American Express OPEN, Jan 1,2013

**Summary:** 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Community Relations — Business Services.

Only in its third year, Small Business Saturday has become part of the American lexicon alongside Black Friday and Cyber Monday. In 2012, the initiative once again struck a chord with consumers, small business owners and employees, corporate America and policy makers in a big way. Consumer awareness of Small Business Saturday jumped to 67 percent from 34 percent just two weeks prior to November 24th and as a result, consumers spent \$5.5 billion with independent merchants on the day. Small Business Saturday aims to support local businesses that create jobs, boost the economy and preserve neighborhoods around the country.

Community relations includes programs that aim to improve relations with, or seek to win the support or cooperation of, people or organizations in communities in which the sponsoring organization has an interest, need or opportunity.

### Full Text: **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Everyone in the public relations and marketing world has heard of Small Business Saturday. In its third year, Small Business Saturday has become part of the American lexicon alongside Black Friday and Cyber Monday. The M Booth team and American Express have worked to continuously grow the program and through extensive brainstorming and planning, found ways to outperform each year, exceeding previous year's results. The challenge in 2012 was to evolve Small Business Saturday into a grassroots initiative by empowering small businesses and communities to take ownership of the day. With consumer support, the goal was to drive more traffic and sales to America's independent, brick and mortar retailers during the most important holiday shopping weekend.

Small businesses play a vital role in the economy and our local communities: according to the Small Business Administration (SBA), they accounted for 64% of net new job creation in the past 18 years. In close collaboration with American Express, M Booth revamped an already successful integrated marketing and public relations campaign that communicated the macroeconomic importance of small businesses while driving home a call to action for consumers and small businesses. In three short years, Small Business Saturday has become the ceremonial kick-off to the holiday shopping season for small business owners and the consumers who love them.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Small Business Saturday was designed to accomplish the following:

- **Raise consciousness among consumers and small businesses** about where they shop and educate them on the positive impact they can make when shopping at local, independently owned stores;
- **Create a community** that encouraged dialogue between consumers and business owners so they could unite around the importance of small business, and consumers

could share their affection for specific small businesses they patronize;

- **Drive demand for goods and services** at small, independently owned businesses. 2010 was about awareness, 2011 was about increasing sales and 2012 focused on grassroots support with small business owners taking ownership of the day.

## RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Although there is an abundance of existing research on the small business landscape, there was nothing that focused specifically on the awareness and importance of Small Business Saturday among small businesses and consumers. M Booth facilitated a research partnership between American Express and the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) – the nation’s leading small business association, with offices in Washington, D.C., and all 50 states – to create the first-ever Small Business Saturday Insights Survey. The pre-Small Business Saturday results revealed that both small business owners and consumers were ready to participate on November 24, 2012.

Pre-November 24th, the Small Business Saturday Insights survey found that:

- 46 percent of small businesses planned to incorporate Small Business Saturday as part of their holiday strategy and the majority (67 percent) of them said they would offer discounts on November 24th.
- Of the tens of millions of Americans familiar with Small Business Saturday, 67 percent planned to “shop small” on the day, November 24th, 2012 (44% said they shopped at small businesses on Small Business Saturday in 2011).

The research helped drive the message that Small Business Saturday is much bigger than small businesses – it affects consumers and communities alike. The survey was a way to help strengthen the Small Business Saturday message, drive PR efforts and create a benchmark to measure future success, something that was new in 2012.

Post-November 24th, the survey results showed that Small Business Saturday was a huge success:

- Of the U.S. consumers who were aware of Small Business Saturday, they spent a total of \$5.5 billion with independent merchants on November 24th.
- Consumer awareness of Small Business Saturday jumped to 67 percent from 34 percent just two weeks prior to November 24th. Of those aware, nearly half (47%) “shopped small” on Small Business Saturday.

## EXECUTION

American Express, M Booth, and marketing partners leveraged the following tactics to build momentum during the third year:

- **Media:** M Booth conducted broad, aggressive outreach to reporters who cover small business, retail and holiday shopping, the economy, and local cities and communities to drive participation and awareness of Small Business Saturday. Spokespeople for the campaign were Ken Chenault, CEO of American Express, Ed Gilligan, Vice Chairman of American Express, Susan Sobott, President of American Express OPEN, Mary Ann Fitzmaurice, Senior Vice President of American Express OPEN, and Patricia Norins, a retail expert who was the Small Business Saturday branded spokesperson for the second year in a row. Interviews were supplemented with success stories from small business owners from across the country.
- **Social Media/Online Tools:** Social media played a critical role in amplifying Small Business Saturday. Consumers were encouraged to spread the word by giving shout-outs to their favorite local shops on Facebook, Twitter and foursquare. Campaigns

drove consumers and business owners to [shopsmall.com](http://shopsmall.com) where they were able to participate in many ways, including:

- American Express and their digital partners offered an online toolkit designed to help small business owners generate sales this holiday season. It included marketing materials and small business social media tips;
  - FedEx, a corporate partner since 2011, gave away \$1 million worth of “Shop Small” American Express gift cards to 40,000 of their customers through a contest so consumers could shop on Small Business Saturday;
  - Limited number of American Express card members who pre-registered their card then shopped at a locally-owned, independent small business on Small Business Saturday received a \$25 statement credit.
  - Thousands of small business owners who signed up at [smallbusinessaturday.com](http://smallbusinessaturday.com) received free, online geo-targeted advertising on NYTimes.com, AOL/Patch sites and Yahoo.com
- **Featured Events:** American Express partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2012 to help communities rally their local businesses leading up to Small Business Saturday. Nearly 50 local Chambers chapters received Small Business Saturday giveaways (door mats, balloons, signage, American Express gift cards) and hosted events on November 24th in addition to more than 60 other events that were put on by local officials and organizations in cities big and small – from New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles to Choctaw, OK, Eden, NC and Jackson Hole, WY. Events ranged from block parties to holiday celebrations and many cities, like Boston, received Mayoral and other government official’s support.

## RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Small Business Saturday surpassed every goal imaginable and was the most successful year yet. Milestones include:

### Raise consciousness among consumers and small businesses

- Media outreach resulted in **more than 15,000 placements** reaching more than **2.6 billion** total audience (increasing more than **51%** over 2011 and **470%** over 2010).
  - Top placements include:
    - **Broadcast/Radio:** The Today Show, CBS This Morning, CNBC - Closing Bell, PBS’ Nightly Business Report, The View, KATIE, Anderson LIVE, NPR, ABC News Radio and CBS Morning Radio.
    - **Online:** WSJ.com, NYTimes.com, USAToday.com, BusinessWeek.com, MSNMoney.com, Inc.com, Forbes.com, CNN.com, and CNBC.com
    - **Print:** *Parade*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Herald*, *New York Daily News*, and *Shop Smart* magazine.
  - One of the distinct differences between these media results and those of other public relations campaigns was that reporters took to the street to get reactions from consumers and business owners alike. And the reaction was overwhelmingly positive:
    - “A huge bump. A lot of Staten Islanders came into the store today. At least 100 percent [increase], so double from what we did last year.” – Daniel Schifter of Casale Jewelers on Staten Island, NY
    - “This Small Business Saturday was probably twice as big as last year’s, and the store was packed all day.” – Leah Daniels of Hill’s Kitchen in Washington, DC

### Engage public officials/policy makers

- President Obama declared his support for Small Business Saturday by shopping small on November 24 and elected officials in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. championed

the day as well.

- The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a Small Business Saturday Resolution, which supports efforts to encourage consumers to shop locally and increase awareness of the value of locally owned small businesses.
- White House Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett, Small Business Administrator Karen Mills and Deputy Administrator Marie Johns shopped at local businesses in Chicago, Boston and Washington D.C., respectively on November 24.

#### **Partner with credible, non-profit and corporate organizations**

- The list of partners increased dramatically from years past. Led by Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP), the Small Business Saturday Coalition is comprised of more than 350 small business organizations that supported the nationwide initiative.
- 155 corporations, such as FedEx, Twitter, AOL/Patch and Clear Channel, banded together to promote shopping at small merchants for Small Business Saturday.

#### **Levels of Small Business Saturday adoption**

- More than 3.2 million Facebook users “liked” the Small Business Saturday Facebook page and more than 213,000 tweets were sent in support of Small Business Saturday in November, many leveraging the hashtags #smallbizsat and #shopsmall.

#### **Drive demand for goods and services**

- The increased awareness translated into higher spending. Those U.S. consumers who were aware of Small Business Saturday spent a total of \$5.5 billion with independent merchants.

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