

Career Watch

Small is the Next **BIG** Thing

Will local businesses provide the jobs of the future?

Should you think small when you're looking for your next job?

After all small, local businesses create up to 80 percent of the new jobs in the U.S. They may be more resistant to recessions, often laying off fewer employees overall than their corporate

counterparts. In past recessions, small businesses jump-started the recovery and began hiring before large companies did. Karen Mills, the head of the Small Business Administration, predicts that small businesses will lead the U.S. out of this recession too.

Instead of sending a resume out to the local division of XYZ Corporation, it might make sense to take a walk down Main Street, and consider the opportunities. **CF**

By Laura L. Crawford

Is Local Better?

In the last few years buy local campaigns have been appearing in small towns and large cities alike. Slogans like, "Buy local or bye-bye local" encourage shoppers to spend their dollars with businesses already rooted in the community.

But does it really make a difference if consumers buy from local farmers, retailers and service providers

rather than head out to the big box stores, malls and franchises?

A number of recent studies in communities from Austin, Tex. to Washington State to Chicago, Ill. have shown that healthy local business really do boost local economies by circulating more money locally, and supporting the jobs, infrastructure and tax base that keep an economy healthy.

National corporations tend to send profits off to headquarters elsewhere rather than keep them circulating in the community. Several studies have shown that shopping at local businesses will retain from 50 percent to four times more money in the local economy than shopping at a national chain will.

Not just the economy

Vibrant small businesses keep communities strong in other ways too says Ingrid Ault, director of Think Local First, a network of small businesses in Ann Arbor, Mich. Because they're small, adaptable and uniquely familiar with

their community's needs, "Local businesses can fill needs in the community that otherwise aren't being met," she says.

And because locally-owned businesses are rooted in the community, they're more likely to really care about providing good service, says Ault.

Locally-produced goods can be more sustainable too because of less transportation and better use of resources.

Local businesses are also more likely to give back to the community, says Ault. In fact, they contribute to local charities over twice as much as national chains do.

Michael Shuman, author of *The Small-Mart Revolution* also points to studies that show strong local economies create strong local communities, with better social stability, less poverty and more political participation.

Local and global

Shuman believes many communities have made a mistake



trying to build their economies on national businesses that have no stake in them.

"There will be no (economic) recovery unless it's focused locally," he says.

But he adds that a strong local economy doesn't mean local businesses have to stay small or can't participate in the larger global economy also. "Local businesses can grow too," he says. "Dumb local is the fantasy that you can create a self-sufficient island apart from the rest of the world.

"Smart local nurtures businesses that can reach out globally too, rather than trying to entice non-local businesses to move to town." **CF**

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