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Article

Boost your business with community engagement this Holiday Season

November 20, 2024

Please note this content was curated for SME businesses in the UK

It's that time of year again when thoughts turn to food, decorations, family, presents and more. Holiday seasons also provide brilliant opportunities for small businesses to go beyond selling products and services, to engage with their local communities and meaningfully benefit society. Whether you're a retailer, café owner, manufacturer or service provider, being community-minded can be great for business.**(1)**

In this article, we'll explore:

- Why the holidays could be a good time for community engagement
- Five practical ways for your business to engage with the community
- Three ways your local community could benefit

A Time For Giving

Community engagement can be an important, fun and reputation-enhancing way to deliver the Social element of your ESG strategy all year round. However, the holiday season provides particular benefits and opportunities for small businesses.

- **Seasonal goodwill**

At Christmas especially, but also during other holiday seasons, people can be more inclined towards a spirit of kindness, giving and togetherness. By associating with local causes, charities and events during the holidays, your business could visibly contribute to the festive atmosphere and foster a deeper connection with your local customers.**(2)**

- **Increased footfall & customer interaction**

Holiday periods naturally attract more customers, whether shopping for gifts or planning and attending social events and occasions. This surge in footfall provides increased opportunities to showcase your brand and products with new and regular customers.**(3)** You could build upon the positive holiday atmosphere to create deeper brand affinity and more long-lasting customer relationships.

- **Business benefits**

Community engagement can deliver many business benefits, such as growth in customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. It could also help strengthen networks and grow your customer base.**(4)** As trading tends to increase during the holidays, all these advantages could be amplified.

Engaged and motivated colleagues

Your colleagues are likely to embrace the holiday spirit just as much as your customers. Involving them in – or even encouraging them to lead – holiday-based initiatives and activities can improve morale, wellbeing and a sense of teamwork. Engaged colleagues can also supercharge local word-of-mouth, bringing extra benefits to your business.**(5)**

Five practical ways for your business to engage with the community

Every small business and community are different. However, many opportunities for community engagement apply whatever your company and customer base. Here are five ideas to get you started.

1. Understand which holidays are celebrated by the communities in your area

When planning your community engagement activities, consider the diversity of celebrations enjoyed by the people in your community. For example, during the winter holidays, there may be families observing Hanukkah as well as celebrating Christmas,Hogmanay, or Diwali.**(6)**

Tailoring your community engagement to acknowledge these celebrations could help demonstrate your commitment to diversity and inclusion.

2. Consider holiday-focused charity partnerships

The holiday season could be a great time to partner with local charities. From helping organise fundraising drives for toys or food to offering customer discounts in exchange for donations to local charities, there are many opportunities to collaborate so your community benefits. A good starting point could be to look at key days and events across the year for inspiration.**(7)**

3. Host a holiday event

Hosting a holiday-themed event, workshop or activity could be a fantastic way to position your business at the heart of the community.**(8)** Events such as holiday cooking classes, special gift wrap services or product sampling could offer valuable opportunities for your business to participate and add to the holiday atmosphere.

4. Partner with other local businesses

Forging partnerships with complementary local businesses could help broaden your reach, provide valuable networking opportunities, and grow your brand.**(9)** The holiday season could provide an ideal focus for joint promotional opportunities or combined marketing and social media campaigns.

5. Measuring your impact

Finally, measuring the impact of your community engagement during the holidays could help you understand what works and aid the planning of future holiday activities. You could use tools such as surveys and polls as well as sales and social media engagement. Where you've partnered with charities and community organisations, you could also work together to understand the social impact you've helped create.

Three ways your local community could benefit

The great thing about community engagement during the holiday season is that everybody benefits. In addition to the business advantages, here are three ways your community could prosper.

1. Support for vulnerable people in your community

Community engagement is a demonstration of your commitment to social impact. You could engage in activities such as charity event sponsorships or 'pay-it-forward' schemes, where your customers can provide food, clothes or toys for local people who are struggling.**(10)**

2. Collaborations with local schools or youth groups

Holiday seasons can be ideal times to engage and offer value for families and young people – particularly those who may struggle financially or socially at these times. You could consider partnering with

schools or community projects to provide free or discounted services. Or perhaps you could host a fun event for children to create holiday decorations.

3. Offer special holiday discounts to community groups

If you're considering offering discounted products and services, it can be a good idea to think about everyone who could benefit. The groups of people you could support might include children, older customers and those facing particular financial challenges. You could also consider offering discounts to local teachers, healthcare workers and community volunteers.

Holidays create special circumstances for small businesses to create invaluable goodwill in their local area. Community engagement activities during these times could also strengthen your brand and help grow your business.

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2 Forbes: https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnhall/2023/12/10/how-businesses-can-give-back-to-their-community-this-holiday-season/
3 Simply Business: https://www.simplybusiness.co.uk/knowledge/retail/festive-trading-a-lifeline-for-small-businesses/
4 Community Engagement: https://www.beazley.com/en-GB/esg-centre/articles/community-engagement-and-small-businesses-a-winning-combination
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