

November 2015

Small Business Saturday UK

The cheesy Christmas songs are already on a loop in the shops and the mince pies have been on the shelves since August – and that can mean only one thing: Christmas is hurtling towards us at warp speed.

But there's another event, a little earlier in December – on the 5th in fact, that can have as much of a positive effect on the economy, the local economy in particular, as Christmas. I refer to Small Business Saturday UK – a movement I've only become aware of since becoming self-employed myself.

So what is Small Business Saturday UK? Well, according to the website (<https://www.smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com>) it's a 'grassroots, non-commercial campaign' that came into being to support and promote small businesses. Not just on the first Saturday in December but beyond. Because a small business is not just for December!

Small Business Saturday was born in 2013. Following last year's event research suggested that 64% of consumers were aware of the campaign and spent in the region of £504m at small businesses. That's not small beer.

The aim of the campaign is to encourage businesses to promote themselves and to work with other small businesses, and to encourage consumers to 'shop local' and support small businesses in their communities. And there are many powerful reasons for doing just that. As a 2013 article from The Guardian pointed out:

- 1) Your spending boosts the local economy. For every £1 spent with a small or medium sized business 63p stays in the local economy – compared to 40p with a larger business. Isn't that a good reason alone? Never mind that:**
- 2) It's the ethical choice.
- 3) Independent shops often sell quirky, one-off gifts.
- 4) You support British entrepreneurs.
- 5) You help build communities.
- 6) You might get a better deal or some good advice.
- 7) You can sometimes try before you buy.

In recent times I've made more effort to 'shop local'. Partly this is a response to the discovery that so many big retail concerns are wriggling out of their taxation responsibilities in such spectacular fashion! A few hundred – well fair enough. Y'know. But when it's billions? Hmmm...

Aside from that it's an effort to support Swindon businesses that I've met through business networking – after all I want businesses and consumers to support me in my [AA Editorial Services](#) venture so it's only right that I do the same is it not?

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Whether you're a small business or a consumer your first port of call is the Small Business Saturday Website: <https://www.smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com>

From there consumers can look up listings of small businesses close to them on the 'My Small Business Finder' gizmo. And small businesses that want to be involved can download information packs, posters and logos.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The role of social media is not forgotten. Businesses and consumers alike can Tweet and post on Facebook and Instagram with photographs of themselves supporting their local businesses using #SmallBizSatUK

SMALL BUSINESSES AND SHOPPING LOCALLY IN SWINDON

One can hear a lot of moaning from the Vox Pop that Swindon doesn't benefit from the independent shopping experience that one might find in Bristol, Bath and Cheltenham. Well ... while maybe not on the same level, Swindon is not without some fabulous independent businesses.

I can't possibly name them all here and there's bound to be ones I don't know of but just to highlight a few:

- Numerous independent coffee shops and cafes the length and breadth of the town
- A number of Polski skleps
- The food hall in Wood Street
- The Italian deli on Commerical Road
- We still have some 'proper' butchers
- A number of independent eating places

And many more that aren't bricks and mortar –people like me for instance – but also people making and selling online only. I've met several of these via business networking and there's more. Many, many more.

No-one wants a depressed High Street. Everyone wants a vibrant High Street that provides a pleasant place to shop and socialize. Well – eschewing the global giants where and when we can, supporting small businesses and shopping locally are positive

steps towards achieving just that—and then we might have more actual shops on Swindon's streets rather than pretend ones like these.