Celebrate Small Business Saturday: Support your minority-owned small business customers

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November 17, 2021

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Small Business Saturday is a day to celebrate and support small and midsize businesses (SMBs) and all they do for their communities. This year, Small Business Saturday is on November 27.

Celebrate Small Business Saturday on November 27 by featuring SMB customers on your social channels, catering lunch from local restaurants, and sharing energy-efficiency information tailored to SMBs.

SMBs, especially minority-owned businesses, have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and have struggled throughout the past 1.5 years. This historically hard-to-engage customer group deserves a little extra appreciation and support this year. Read on for some of our recommendations for engaging minority-owned SMB customers in honor of Small Business Saturday.

Why should you focus on minority-owned small business customers?

Minority-owned small businesses face added challenges compared to nonminority-owned businesses. And the pandemic only amplified those challenges. According to the CNN article Minority-owned businesses are struggling more than others. Here's why, these businesses:

- Were more likely to be in industries hit hardest by the pandemic
- Have had a harder time receiving federal aid such as the US Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program

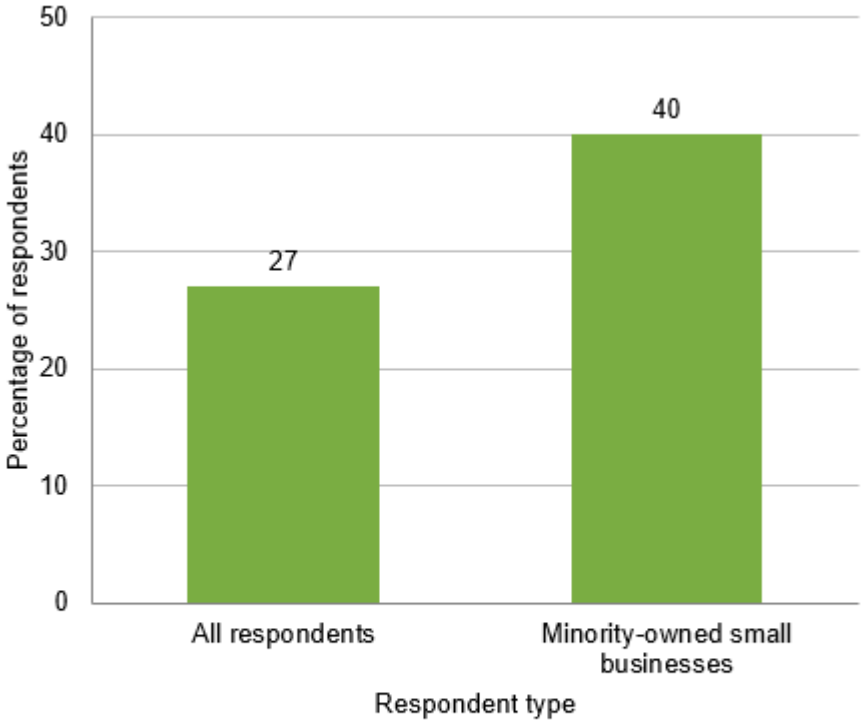
But despite these challenges, minority-owned small businesses are optimistic about economic recovery after COVID and have supported their communities through the pandemic, according to research by McKinsey & Company, a management consulting firm (**figure 1**). You can read the full McKinsey report COVID-19's effect on minority-owned small businesses in the United States for more information.

Figure 1: Minority-owned businesses are supporting their communities during COVID-19

To better support their communities and employees during the pandemic, minority-owned businesses added services such as:

- Free delivery
- Adjusted hours for immunocompromised and older people
- Special communications with safety guidelines

Assist these businesses in supporting their communities; it will help build trusted relationships with your minority-owned business customers and their customers by default.



Base: Small and midsize businesses with less than $500 million in annual revenue (n = 1,004). **Notes:** New services include providing free delivery, adjusted hours for the elderly, and special communications with safety guidelines. Survey conducted May 8–12, 2020. © E Source; data from McKinsey & Company COVID-19 US Small and Medium-Size Business Financial Pulse Survey

How do you engage minority-owned SMB customers?

Now that we know the importance of engaging minority-owned SMB customers, let's talk about the ways utilities are already doing this.

Research the needs and behaviors of your SMB customers. Getting to know the needs of your minority-owned SMBs is a necessary first step in learning how to better engage those customers. Start by creating opportunities for active listening. This listening is important because it will help you to understand the messaging and tactics that will help you reach your target audience that's made up of customers with unique languages, cultures, and experiences.

Need more help engaging minority-owned small businesses?

Check out our report How to engage minority-owned small businesses to learn all our recommendations for engaging this diverse customer group. This report is available to members of the E Source Business Marketing Service.

Feature minority-owned businesses in your messaging. Feature images of your target audience in your marketing materials and highlight what that community values. Focus on problems and solutions that are relevant to minority-owned businesses.

Get involved in the community. Partnering with local organizations such as chambers of commerce, downtown business associations, local government, and nonprofits will help you:

- Conduct outreach and recruitment to small business customers
- Share information on incentives and rebates
- Encourage businesses to use existing incentives and programs
- Build trust with your minority-owned SMB customers

What can you do for Small Business Saturday?

Supporting SMBs has a direct impact on the local economy. According to American Express, Approximately 67 Cents of Every Dollar Spent at a Small Business Remains in the Local Community.

So, what are some ideas for how utilities can celebrate this national holiday? We brainstormed a handful of ideas focused on minority-owned small businesses.

Get social. Post on social media channels leading up to and during Small Business Saturday to encourage customers to Shop Small.

- Reshare content from local small businesses about the holiday to amplify reach and engage with more people.
- Feature leaders at your utility visiting and shopping at small businesses for the day.
- Host a contest where customers can enter to win a gift card from a local business.
- Show off and share what your utility has done to support small businesses in the community.

Remind small business customers about the ways that you're there to support them. Remind your SMB customers to register with American Express to show up on the Shop Small map and receive free resources and marketing materials from The Shop Small Resource Hub. Encourage them to celebrate the day by partnering with you to make their businesses more efficient. Send them information on your programs and services that they'd most benefit from.

Attend local events. Encourage your employees to participate in events in their communities to celebrate Small Business Saturday. Events might be put on by a business alliance or chamber of commerce.

Treat hard-working employees. Order a catered lunch for your employees this weekend from local restaurants and shops. This one is twofold as you can show your employees some extra appreciation while directly supporting your SMB customers.

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