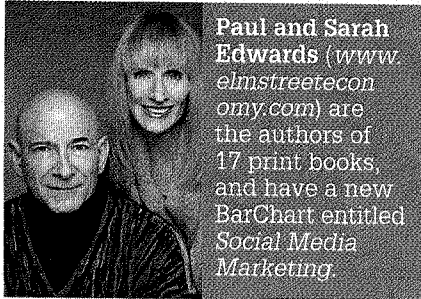


PAUL AND SARAH EDWARDS: LIFESTYLES FOR THE MILLENNIUM

MARY ANN HALPIN PHOTOGRAPHY



Paul and Sarah Edwards (www.elmstreeteconomy.com) are the authors of 17 print books, and have a new BarChart entitled *Social Media Marketing*.

Be there to be local

BUYING LOCAL IS in. It's personal, popular and convenient. "Shop local" campaign efforts like Google Place and the American Express-sponsored Small Business Saturday are putting local enterprises on the map.

But to stay there, these businessès need to be available when people need them. Our

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holiday experience clearly demonstrated this. In the spirit of shopping locally, we had planned to make our holiday purchases in our community.

Unfortunately, we found several stores closed during their posted hours, and we called proprietors who never returned our calls. As a result, we had to turn to outside services and establishments that were open and answered the phones.

Of course, it can be tempting for a small-business owner to take off at special peak shopping times along with everyone else, and it is difficult to always cover the phones when demand is high.

But technology and some planning can help owners meet these challenges without losing local business or, worse, disappointing potential customers who won't come back.

Here are three steps you can take to attract and keep local customers.

1. Broadcast your presence. Searches for local businesses on smartphones and computers on sites such as Google Plus Local, Apple Maps, Facebook Nearby and its newly announced Graph Searches are on the rise. They put you a touch away from shoppers, so long as you're listed in all possible local

business directories, including Google, Bing, Yahoo! and MerchantCircle. For links to these directories, see "The Ultimate List: 50 Local Business Directories" at HubSpot.com.

2. Commit to being open during posted hours and respond to phone calls and emails promptly. When you can't, have someone cover your store and phone, forward calls to yourself or to whoever is covering for you, or use an answering service and email auto-responders.

3. Make it easy for people to shop or use your services during busy times. If you want or need to take time off during the holidays or at peak periods, use pre-holiday events or promotions through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus), your website and mailings—print or email—so people can make purchases or use your services early.

If you take steps like these, you and your business can enjoy the increasingly bright spotlight focused on buying local. [E]



Tablet or smartphone?
Scan or click here for a short video from Paul and Sarah Edwards. (See page 5 for scanning details.)