

The 3/50 Project Launches LookLocal iPhone App

The first-of-its-kind app searches for independent merchants nationwide

Minneapolis, MN, August 9, 2011 — Hundreds of communities publish directories or websites listing local merchants in the area, but few residents actually tote that material with them on a daily basis. Good intentions are there...they just don't connect on the paying end.

The 3/50 Project aims to repair that disconnect with LookLocal, the first iPhone app to showcase "mom and pop" businesses throughout North America.

"The goal is to put locally owned, independent brick and mortar merchants right in your hand, regardless of where you are at the moment," explains Baxter. "No one remembers to grab a brochure that lists businesses when they walk out the door, but who leaves home without a phone?"

"Independent" plays the central role here: Merchants who have no outside corporate support of any kind--the same businesses who return the largest percentage of their annual revenue to the local economy, according to a 2009 Civic Economics Study.

As a free download for iPhone users, LookLocal features "independent brick and mortar" merchants, locating those closest to where the user stands, regardless of whether they're at home or on the road--a feature no regional or city-specific app can offer. Category shortcuts labeled Shop, Eat, Sip, Stay, Services, and Play allow users to immediately fine tune their results; click-to-call, mapping, and social media capabilities offer immediate connection to both businesses and their friends in a single tap.

Marrying The 3/50 Project's national database (currently more than 23,000 listings) with a smart phone app was no accident, according to Baxter. "I travel for a living, speaking about the Project from coast to coast. That meant needing to visit our website, look up Supporters, then print out a list of businesses before I left the house. Sometimes, I remembered to do that, but sometimes, I was rushing out the door, later landing in a location with no clue where to eat or where to shop."

LookLocal provides the missing link.

Inclusion in LookLocal is free and automatic for independent brick and mortar merchants who sign up as Supporters on The350Project.net. Businesses who prefer more "oomph" in their profiles have the option of upgrading to an Enhanced listing, which includes their social media links, website links, and photographs, making it even easier to connect with consumers on a personal level.

Carrie Donovan (owner, Artichoke Designs, Dunwoody GA) sees LookLocal as an invaluable tool in the battle for consumer attention. "You rarely see someone without a cell phone,"



explains Donovan. "With LookLocal, I can introduce my business to potential customers through photos, links, and my own words, personalizing the experience in a whole new way. This gives me a chance to win them over before they head off to a big box."

Versions for iPad and Android are currently in development, thus covering the three largest iOS pipelines to mobile consumers.

"It's free to be in the app, free to download the app--this is a win/win for independent merchants, regardless of where they're located," according to Baxter. "No way we're stopping until everyone can find the little guy down the street."

About The 3/50 Project

Born in a blog post, then going viral via social media, The 3/50 Project exploded onto the consumer awareness scene on March 30, 2009 as a grassroots movement promoting locally owned, independent businesses. Unique in its approach, the Project eschews traditional "buy local" language excluding non-retail merchants, opting instead to advocate on behalf of all independent brick and mortars, from retailers to restaurants, hair salons to dry cleaners.

In addition to its all-inclusive focus, The 3/50 Project addresses the realities of today's lifestyles, reminding consumers to include local independent brick and mortar merchants without demanding they forego national chains or internet purchases altogether. This previously untried approach immediately garnered glowing attention from national media while successfully strengthening small businesses and their communities coast to coast.

About Cinda Baxter

Cinda Baxter understands small business from the inside out, having once been a retailer herself. As past recipient of two national Retailer Excellence Awards and press coverage ranging from Modern Bride to The Wall Street Journal, she now "pays it forward" to retailers and vendors as founder of The 3/50 Project--the only "local" movement in the United States created and run by a former independent brick and mortar merchant.

Widely recognized as an expert in the gift and stationery industries, Cinda's resumé includes seats on numerous influential boards; speaking engagements in the U.S. and abroad; and as Contributing Editor for the trade publication *Gifts and Decorative Accessories Magazine*.

Singled out by *Inc. Magazine* for her expertise in using social media to engage consumers offline, she is a respected social networking pioneer, having formed three successful online communities prior to The 3/50 Project: Brilliant Ink, The Print Lab, and RetailSpeaks.

Links

Download the app	http://bit.ly/oYqdSG
The 3/50 Project website	http://www.the350project.net
Seminars about The 3/50 Project	http://www.facebook.com/the350project
Blog post including list of Enhanced profiles	http://alwaysupward.com/blog/?p=5395

Graphics are available on the Resources page of the website under Ad Graphics; for additional needs, contact press_inquiries@the350project.net

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