Here's how to leverage your participation and success in Small Business Saturday

A post-event media pitch guide for independent retailers. Small Business Saturday is November 28, 2026.

First, don't be afraid to contact a local business reporter, blogger, podcaster or TV producer. Even if you are, plan to contact them anyway.

Before you ever pick up a phone and call a reporter, send a blogger an email or DM someone on LinkedIn or Instagram about your success, get your pitch clear in your mind.

Keep it simple... and honest. American Express heavily promotes the shopping day, but it's what you did with your store that made it successful.

Start with the national numbers

The National Retail Federation releases its Thanksgiving weekend shopper survey the Tuesday after Cyber Monday. This year that's **Tuesday, December 1, 2026**. Find it at https://nrf.com/media-center and pull the headline figure.

Here's what last year's release gave you to work with: a record 202.9 million shoppers over the five-day weekend, with 129.5 million shopping in stores, up 3%.

Your opener writes itself: “A record number of shoppers came out over Thanksgiving weekend. Would you be interested in a local angle on the national story?”

Three ideas you could begin with:

- Your increase in sales over the prior year and what led to it.
- How you got people to shop in your store rather than online, using social media and email.
- How you and the other brick and mortar retailers on your street made yourselves more approachable by coming together to promote and market.

Reporters and bloggers are going to be interested in how they can use you as an independent retailer example to help other local businesses. You need to pitch your success in a way that teaches other businesses a technique that worked for you that will work for them too.

Reporters and bloggers are going to love the personal success story to help other local businesses succeed.

Have your photos ready

Every outlet wants a picture or a short video now. On Saturday, shoot the line at your register, your window, your team and your busiest hour on your phone.

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Offer them in your pitch. A reporter who already has the visuals is far more likely to run your story.

Here's what I'm talking about

These come from my Facebook fans.

Vicki Mandrell was one of fifty merchants in Sauk Valley, IL who pulled together to jointly promote Small Business Saturday. A post-event pitch might be, “Would you be interested in the lessons we learned on our way to getting 800 likes in a month on Facebook and the successes we enjoyed from doing that?”

John MacDougall had advertisements in their bags for two weeks prior to the holiday weekend. He also had several Facebook postings and an email blast at 7:30 am on Saturday. His sales were “about 2.5x last year.”

Think of how John could pitch that, “Nationally we're told, retail sales were up about 13% the past weekend; ours were up double. Would you be interested in the three steps I learned any small business needs to take to effectively promote their business?” He might also give his top two posts on Facebook as examples.

Got the idea? You are helping the reporter come up with a story for their readers, not just saying how great you are.

Mary Koback Holmes reported, “We were up by 20% over last year. No storewide sales were needed. There was genuine support for shopping small. We gained many new customers on this day and saw many of our loyal customers throughout the day. Love Small Business Saturday!”

Her pitch might include, “Would you be interested in an independent local retailer whose sales grew 20% even without discounting on Small Business Saturday?”

Mary Sisson got a story in her local business journal prior to Small Business Saturday, put up American Express' free poster on the door, put out the Small Business Saturday doormat... she promoted the works. She reports she was up 21% over last year's Small Business Saturday, and did about 150% of Black Friday's business. She lost her voice too, she added happily.

She could pitch, “Brick and mortar retail stores had significant sales increases. Would you be interested in how our local toy store did 150% of Black Friday's business by partnering with American Express?”

Write out the following so you're prepared

(Smile so they hear it.) “Good day, this is (your name) from (your business) on (your street) (and if necessary your city). Are you on deadline or is this a good time?”

Always wait for them to tell you it is a good time. Then give your pitch. Then tell your success story.

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If you email instead, put your pitch in the subject line. That's the only part a busy reporter reads before deciding.

Make it bigger than your store

Relate why this is important to your local economy. Think JOBS. Think hope.

American Express's 2025 Small Business Economic Impact Study found that of every dollar spent at a small business in the US, 68 cents stays in the local community. That's the line that gets an editor to say yes.

If your story doesn't feel long enough, you can share some of the following...

If you can, give them another retailer who had similar results but maybe from a different angle.

Reporters love stats like this one, “According to the American Express 2026 Shop Small Impact Study, 88% of U.S. consumers expect to shop at small businesses this holiday season.” Swap in NRF's new Thanksgiving weekend number once it's out.

And if you want to include an expert quote, like from me, here you go. “'Small Business Saturday has presented independent retailers with a premium shopping event for local customers to seek them out. The incredible success of the event is testimony to the fact that brick and mortar retailers are alive and well - contrary to some naysayers,' said Bob Phibbs, The Retail Doctor and author of The Sales Floor Problem.”

Use these tips to make a Small Business Saturday that shines for you and your community.

Good selling!

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