

# MAKE COMMUNITY EVENTS WORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS



## Welcome to Hillsboro's Living Room!

People from all around Hillsboro associate historic Downtown as the place where the community gathers to celebrate – celebrate our agricultural roots, our cultural diversity, and being part of the Hillsboro family. The events that bring THOUSANDS of people to Downtown Hillsboro are your opportunity to introduce your business to new customers and to share your love for our community with your existing customers.

As a business owner, you have an important stake in the revitalization of Downtown Hillsboro. While much progress has been made throughout the district, what puts the most “feet on the street” are the community events (*see the list of all 2020 events*). Yet as successful as these events are, two questions always arise:

### Why are Downtown streets closed for some special events?

Simply, it is done for the safety of attendees, merchants, and volunteers.

### Why do we have special events Downtown?

First, special events bring thousands of people to Downtown Hillsboro. With so many visitors here, the opportunity for Downtown merchants to generate extra income is greatly increased. This is a day-of-event benefit.

Second, special events allow visitors to see all that Downtown Hillsboro has to offer. While not everyone who attends an event will be shopping, certainly they will all be looking – looking at what stores, restaurants and services are here. If they have an enjoyable time during the event, they are much more likely to return at a later date to make purchases. This is an after-event benefit.

Third, successful events get people thinking about Downtown Hillsboro as a destination for shopping, food and entertainment, rather than, as a place to pass through to simply get somewhere else. This is a long-term benefit.

The ideas in this brochure will give you helpful information on how you can make money during these events and will provide you with tools you can use to attract people and bring them into your store – before, during, and after the event.

## PRE-EVENT TIPS

### “Plant the Seed.”

Find out the theme and mission of upcoming events, then look for ways to either tie that to your products and service or decorate to match the theme. A few weeks before the event, put some items near your cash register or in your window that fit the theme of the upcoming event. The point is to raise awareness of the event and to allow you to tell your customers about the specials you will be offering during the event.

*When Pirates are the theme, Piccolo Mondo Toys encourages their staff to dress in costume the day of the event and create pirate/treasure themed games for kids to play.*

*LeStuff Antiques is known for color-based sales, and most stores could adopt that idea. How about: Everything green is 10% off the day of the St. Patrick's Day parade?*

*A restaurant may promote a cocktail that matches the theme – of course there is always green beer on St Patrick's Day, but how about an apple cider cocktail on Farmers' Market days in the fall?*

### **Print and distribute flyers.**

Advertise some special buys in your store during the event. Beginning a few weeks before the event, put the fliers in your customers' shopping bags so they know about the event and what will be going on in your store.

### **Work your contact list.**

If you have an email list of your customers, send them an email and let them know about the event, your business hours during the event, and what you will be offering. If you have a mailing list, consider sending a flier along with a coupon that is good only during the event. Staying in contact with your customers makes them feel valued and it keeps your business in their mind.

*Gimre Shoes sends out postcards to costumers every week of the summer to promote their specials that run Tuesday through Saturday, targeting customers that have shown preference for the featured brand.*

### **Prepare coupons for event attendees.**

Create coupons and hand them out during the event. The important thing is to let people know that your business is open for business.

### **Promote the event on social media.**

Take local marketing to the next level with social media. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are great platforms to build interest. Visit the event page on Twitter or Instagram to find popular hashtags. Hashtags are short words or phrases that identify trending topics. By using event hashtags, you can draw attention from anyone following the event. Imagine the impact when an event has thousands of followers.

Consider running promotions leading up to the event, which can work on any social media platform you choose. Offer a discount or small giveaway for sharing your tweets, photos, videos, and other content. At the same time, give people a reason to stop by your store during the event. After all, the point of building awareness is to boost sales.

*Primrose & Tumbleweed does a great job using social media to remind their customers to "Stop in and cool off if it gets too hot during a Tuesday Night Market" or "grab breakfast before the parade".*

### **Be a Sponsor.**

Your business can support the market and in return be promoted at a variety of levels, as seen in the market's sponsorship materials. Some packages even include promotional booth space.

## **DATE-OF-EVENT TIPS**

### **Make sure your business remains open during the event.**

You can't make a sale if you aren't open. While special event attendees may not be your "regular" customers, they are your "potential" customers. Show them that you are supportive of the Downtown and that Downtown is a great place to be. Even better – if you have a restroom you can open to the

public or an area for mothers that need to breastfeed, take a note down to the information booth before the event so they can refer people in need your way.

### **Pay attention to the “curb appeal” of your business.**

Sweep outside, clean your windows, and prop the doors open if the weather allows. Inside, make sure your business is clean, well-lit, and inviting. Fresh flowers and balloons are great, quick fixes. Flowers are available at fellow Downtown merchants Hill Florist (111 SE 3rd Avenue) and Farmington Gardens (466 SE Baseline). Hill Florist also has balloons.

### **Have a sidewalk sale table.**

Attract attendees to your store. When possible, try to offer items that complement the special event. For example, a retail business might consider selling sunscreen, tanning lotion, flip-flops, sunglasses, or hats during the Tuesday Night Markets. If your business doesn't carry these items, just moving some of your regular merchandise outside brings extra attention to your shop. Just remember to leave a five-foot clear path for pedestrian access.

### **Have a special in-store sale or special only during the hours of the event.**

Provide specials on select food or merchandise that will draw people into your business. While they're in your shop, consider running an easy contest. Something as simple as a “Guess the number of beans in the jar” contest for a chance to win a gift certificate to your business. Have participants fill out a piece of paper with their guess, name, address, phone number, email and birth date (no year needed). By doing so, they've entered the contest and you've got important information that allows you to add them to your mailing list or to begin one. And by getting their birth date, you have the opportunity to send them a card on their special day – something most of your competitors don't even dream of doing.

### **Offer “Just Looking” coupons.**

Hand them out to customers who are browsing in your store and invite them to come back. Remember that people are more likely to respond to “dollars off” promotions than they are to “percentage off” promotions.

*Give out “bounce back” coupons. These coupons have an expiration date within a short time frame allowing you to determine the success of the event.*

### **Offer to hold customers' purchases for them.**

Some people resist making purchases during special events because they don't want to carry additional items. Holding packages is an easy way to help close a sale and to provide great customer service that will long be remembered.

### **Have an open house or in-store demonstration during the event.**

This is a great way for service-related businesses to introduce themselves and their services to the public. Have a brief sign-in form to capture the name and email address of everyone who attended so you can follow up with them after the event. Also, be sure to pass out fliers or business cards to all who attend. Create a fun atmosphere in your store by creating activity. Event patrons are more likely to visit a busy store.

### **Build your mailing list.**

Following up with customers is the key to getting repeat business and referrals. Take every opportunity to get names and contact information from event attendees. Building a mailing list allows you to communicate directly and inexpensively throughout the year with your customers. Encourage customers to enter a drawing for a door prize. Once customers have filled out the entry card, you can use the information to send out promotional mailings

**Volunteer with your business team.**

All the community events utilize community members to support the events, and this is an especially great way for non-retail businesses to get their name out there during events.

## **AFTER EVENT TIPS**

**Follow-up with those that came in.**

If you collected names and contact information from people who visited your business during the event, reach out to them. Even if they didn't purchase anything during the event, sometimes a follow up is all that is needed to make a sale or close a deal.

**Stay in contact.**

In today's world, that's easy and inexpensive. One of the simplest and most effective ways to stay fresh in the minds of your customers is to send them regular electronic newsletters. There are many programs available online, such as Constant Contact and MailChimp. There you will find a wide range of easy-to-use templates for creating your own newsletters. Use them to tell your customers what is new in your business. Let them know of other upcoming Downtown events. Conduct a survey to find out what your customers are looking for. The possibilities are endless. Between newsletters, maintain contact and inform customers about sales and specials through email and snail mail.

**Be part of planning other events.**

Downtown special events don't happen by themselves. They take months of planning and organizing by volunteers and merchants just like you. If you are part of the planning, you have direct input on how events can be structured to better meet the needs of Downtown business owners. If you are interested in joining an event committee, please contact us.

Events are also a great opportunity to create cross promotions with your neighboring businesses, maybe a passport or scavenger hunt. We can't wait to see the creative, collaborative ideas that Downtown Hillsboro businesses come up with.

**Experiment and learn.**

Not every promotional idea will work for every business every time. Local marketing takes practice. Try different things. Keep what works. Get rid of what doesn't. Come up with new ideas.

But don't worry; it gets easier the more you interact with your community. Be sure to have fun, friendly staff working the event, as good energy goes a long way. Most importantly, focus on what makes your products special. When you have something unique to offer, you'll have no trouble coming up with great marketing ideas for small business. If you need help, just contact Hillsboro Downtown Partnership and we will be glad to work with you.

## **EVEN MORE IDEAS:**

### ***Proud to be HSD Day at the Market.***

The Hillsboro School District event that is embedded within the Downtown Farmers' Market (traditionally the second Saturday in May) is one of the best attended markets, as families with school age children are attracted to activities that their children are participating in while other community members come to see what exciting things are happening in schools these days. The opportunity to offer specials (a discount if you show your school ID), host a group (i.e. meeting place for Liberty robotics club), or show your support of HSD to your social media followers abound.

### ***Create a Market Token Promotion.***

It's true that many folks that come to the Farmers' Market are there to buy produce, but you can reinforce that purpose and entice folks to spend some money in your business. The market sells \$5 wooden tokens that work like cash with any of the vendors. You can purchase some tokens and run a promotion that for every \$50 spent in your business during the market hours, the purchaser gets a \$5 token. Even if folks don't make a \$50 purchase, many may be intrigued and visit your store for the first time or appreciate your support of the market.

### ***Promotional Material***

Put your promotional material about your business at the event's information booth. Be creative. Plan a game, offer discounts, give people a reason to visit your business.

### ***Highlight the Season***

A restaurant could reach out to one of the farm vendors to purchase fruits or vegetables that are in season and feature it in a special dish or drink for the day/weekend.