

Buy Local & Hour Exchanges

By, Linda Hogan & Terry Daniels, 2011

How an Hour Exchange (Time bank) can benefit Buy Local members:

- Members – The exchange community will expand the potential pool of new Buy Local members
- Customers – Exchange members tend to Buy Local, are community centered and are customers for BUY LOCAL businesses
- Staff – BUY LOCAL members, as members in the exchange, can ‘hire,’ for cash or for time, from the network that is the exchange. BUY LOCAL businesses may offer hours to their cash paid staff as part of a benefits package
- Investors – Exchange members could become a source of local investment capital, in cash or time, for BUY LOCAL business expansion
- Advertising - Exchange members are a perfect target market for advertising, sales, coupon guides, or word-of-mouth marketing for BUY LOCAL businesses. Businesses could update our collective social network with special offers real-time; if business is slow, they put out requests for staffing that give it a new way to interface with its customers and its community
- Support – The Exchange itself, or its members, can help build the BUY LOCAL network, and vice versa, by sharing space, staff, marketing etc. If BUY LOCAL chapters and a local exchange worked together, BUY LOCAL businesses might be able to pay some of their dues (are there dues?) to support the local administration in some combination of hours and cash. Exchange/BUY LOCAL could then pay a portion of the compensation of the network support staff with these hours. Many Exchanges already operate this way within its current membership. By inviting an alliance between BUY LOCAL and local exchanges we hope to empower the building of BUY LOCAL networks with the power of a community currency.

There is an interesting and powerful synergy that can develop between local businesses and their exchange communities. Businesses in the network will always be challenged to find the right balance between the use of their cash resources to either invest in the growth of their business or the maintenance of their current customer demand. Often times when customer demand, and the need for growth capital, is at it greatest, the business is cash strapped. The potential of utilizing time bankers to meet this demand has the potential to greatly expand the source of local investment capital in a community.

Could a business utilize the time bank membership for special one-time projects and pay in time rather than scarce cash? Could this low pressure, interviews in action type of hiring be a great way to job train and test new hires without the typical risk of a businesses hiring process?

To earn time dollars, BUY LOCAL members could utilize the times where their cash customers are scarce, and increase their acceptance of time dollars for their services or products. In communities where cash paying jobs are scarce the time economy will allow community members and its businesses to earn and spend something they are wealthy in –

Time. Business activity can be increased due to this new source of community currency. Businesses, as with all exchange members, can trade in whatever works best for their commercial transaction, cash or time.

How a BUY LOCAL network can benefit an Hour Exchange (time bank) network:

- Members – The BUY LOCAL network will expand the potential pool of new Hour Exchange members
- Businesses – Exchange members get to support community-centered businesses; possible discounts; another venue to earn/ spend hours.
- Job training / employment opportunities – working with their local businesses, exchange members get to increase their skills and possibly augment their cash or hour income
- Investors – Exchange members could become a source of local investment capital, in cash or time, for BUY LOCAL business expansion. A local business may utilize exchange member time in their start up and/or expansion and pay them back over a number of years. A interest free time bank loan can be paid back in a way that is clearly communicated but paid off in a manner that suites the BUY LOCAL members business and cash cycle
- Advertising - Exchange members can access BUY LOCAL business websites to find out where they are and when they're open. Sales, new services and products could be offered across this social network. Banner ads with click and print coupons could allow exchange members new ways to save money and support their local economy.
- Support – Same as above. We imagine that increasing the links and changing the way business interface with their exchange community will help support each other in ways that stretch the imagination. Having a more intimate relationship with their customers for BUY LOCAL members and exchange members having a better understanding of the needs of their local business, beyond the typical business/customer relationship could create better communities. Communities with less box stores where money, time or hours, flow out of the community; communities where the vital energy of the community slows down and stays awhile and has a chance to invigorate the local living economy.