

# New England Local Business Forum Fall Gathering Oct. 27, 2010

**Hosted by:** Monadnock Buy Local at Alyson's Orchard, Walpole, N.H.

**In attendance:** Monadnock Buy Local (Jen Risley, Bonnie Hudspeth, Mark Rebillard, Joel Moyer) ; Local First Alliance of the Upper Valley (Alison Baker) ; Worcester Local First (Steve Jones-D'Agostino) ; South Portland Buy Local (Dani Nisbet) ; Somerville Local First (Joe Grafton) ; Cambridge Local First and SBN Boston (Laury Hammel, Janneke House) ; Seacoast Local (Karen Marzloff, Miranda Cruz, Kelsey Silfvenius) ; Romek Sypko (Gilsum, NH) ; Cimbria Badenhause (Chocorua, NH).

**Agenda:** After registration, coffee and reconnecting, we shared our intentions for the day, what each of us could offer and any needs we were hoping to meet. We honed in on five topics to cover in brief discussion, followed by a long-format presentation on messaging, and concluding with a discussion of the future of NELBF. Thanks to Laury for facilitating the meeting.

## 1. Local Economy Communities (Laury)

What is a Local Economy Community? It's a resolution, a pledge, a task force, a transformation... The pledge includes a commitment from the city government to:

- Buy local
- "Move Your Money"
- More local procurement
- More local food
- Preference for policies that support local businesses

When City Hall adopts this pledge, it institutionalizes the commitment, so it endures beyond current elected officials and can be used to set agenda for city departments and committees. The task force can serve as a watchdog, facilitate opportunities for the city to achieve these goals and should include representatives from the city, schools and businesses.

## 2. Governance (Cimbria)

Many of us are still seeking a governance structure and organizing principles for meetings and committees that are effective and workable, while encouraging more stakeholders to "lead from where they're at." Cimbria described a system called "Sociocracy" (an overview is available on Wikipedia or through Cimbria), using consent-based decision-making. Challenges: getting over-tasked entrepreneurs to participate in a system that requires them to read materials before a meeting. Opportunities: A systematic way to grow community participation in our networks and grow as a "movement" rather than a top-down, staff-driven model.

## Elements of Good Local-First Leadership (All)

- Distribution of agenda/minutes for review
- Consensus decision-making
- Agenda items -- outcome-based
- Working board
- Connect with your committees between meetings
- Clear, simple and complete job descriptions for board, director, committees and staff
- Work plans, with measures of success
- Board manages board; staff manages programs
- Personal Accountability

### 3. Value Proposition (Joe)

Practice your Elevator Pitches:

1. What we do: 30-60 second description of the organization's vision, activities and impact.
2. Why you should join: Include the above, but emphasize the areas where they might plug-in. Remember to speak to their areas of concern, beginning with their business, then broadening out to the community and the planet.

Value your time and expertise:

- Price everything (membership, ads, coupons, admission), but keep the price low and emphasize the return on investment. Joe's rule of thumb is for every \$1 a member puts in, they should feel a \$5 in Return on Investment.
- You and your networks are a relationship generator: Everything that happens in your network starts with relationships; everything you and your members do should build more relationships.

Know your inventory of member services:

- Promotions (annual publications and daily online media presence)
- Campaigns
- Programs & Events
- Networking
- Technical Assistance
- Community contacts
- Policy advocacy
- PR/Media for local businesses.

### 4. Fundraising Events- Getting Started (All)

Could be parties, workshops, festivals, conferences or fundraising-specific.

Some examples include:

- SBN Boston: All-local dinners, hosted by local restaurants (\$900) ; All-day conference (\$2500) ; Member party and auction with NPR guests (\$10,000)
- Cambridge Local First: Internet marketing workshop (\$4,000) ; also, has raised \$30,000 in sponsorships from three local banks (\$10,000 each)
- Seacoast Local: Fishtival (\$2000), based on \$4 tickets per tasting
- Somerville Local First: HarvestFest (\$4,500), based on ticket sales of \$20-\$35 each
- South Portland: Cruise (\$600)

## 5. Messaging the Movement

Mixing It Up - A dozen ways to get the message out to your community (Joe)

1. Print Publications (directories, coupon books, etc.)
2. Online (web, email, social media)
3. Campaigns
4. Events
5. PR/Media stories
6. Decals
7. Public/Flash Events
8. Tabling at events (with activities such as "Where Does the Money Go?" games)
9. Viral marketing/ chatter campaigns
10. Youth engagement
11. Colleges/Universities - include directories and newsletters in orientation packets, tabling at events, etc.
12. Contests/Competitions

## 6. Email Newsletters (Jen and Karen)

- Find relevant content (stories, ideas and events) in member newsletters, headlines, emails, web sites, blogs etc.
- Compile it continuously Throughout the month, grab content (ideas, events, stories, etc.) and stash it someplace really handy.
- Generate profiles/interviews via volunteers/peers
- Strong content: Your newsletter needs to be a good value proposition for the community -- news you can use, mission-based.
- Don't post long articles; short blurbs with lots of links to original web sites for content are more readable.
- Love it! Give your newsletter a good name (not hokey) ; use a good subject line (not "January newsletter") ; everyone loves bright and colorful photos
- Plan on 3-5 hrs. to write the newsletter
- Be sure to have a trusted proofreader look at it, and double check all your links and whether relevant partners, volunteers and sponsors are noted.

- Use an email marketing platform, but also multiple-post on your web site, blogs, Twitter, etc. Read your reports to see what's working. An "open" rate of 25-35% is great!
- Sign up for each others' newsletters

### **NELBF Plans for the Future!**

NELBF members value and will continue to organize twice-a-year New England gatherings. We will make a major effort to plan these gatherings in advance and to actively recruit other local business organizations to participate. The 2010 Fall Gathering had representatives of seven local business organizations, and our goal is to have 15 represented in the spring of 2011. NELBF will depend on the participation of all networks in leadership and planning as we move forward. All of us have the expertise to "lead from where we're at."

We agreed to seven new objectives between now and the NELBF Spring Gathering:

**1. Expand NELBF Steering Committee.** The NELBF Steering Committee of Karen, Joe, Stacy, and Laury are eager to expand the leadership and engagement of NELBF member organizations. Janneke House from Cambridge Local First and Dani Nisbet from the South Portland agreed to join the steering committee, and we are still looking to have 2-3 other local business organizations to be represented. The steering committee will continue to plan our bi-annual gatherings, to help each network best practices in the area of funding, recruiting, organizing and planning. The steering committee will need everyone's support for planning events and agendas for 2011.

**2. Develop a New England-wide campaign to promote local purchasing during the holidays--Shift Your Shopping.** Joe will lead a team to transform [www.shiftyourshopping.org](http://www.shiftyourshopping.org) into an aggregate site for our holiday campaigns, in order to promote the work we are doing across New England. Joel, Janneke and Allison will help facilitate network participation and review content. This will need to happen in the next two weeks. This program still needs a volunteer to develop a promotion strategy.

**3. Introduce Monthly Local Economy Conference Calls** on a monthly basis (perhaps starting in January) for in-depth exploration of effective tools and techniques. Suggested topics include Local Economy Communities; Move Your Money campaigns; Membership Drives; etc. : Laury will help coordinate these, in collaboration with NELBF experts.

**4. Encourage other New England Communities to Become "Local Economy Communities."** Cambridge, Mass., and Somersworth, N.H., have become the first two "Local Economy Communities" and the impact has been immense. Laury will organize a Local Economy Conference Call to talk about the why, the how, and the when for making this happen.

**5. Enhance Communication Between Gatherings with NELBF Members**, including requests for help, discussion threads, etc. Led by Alison and Steve.

**6. Incorporate the NELBF into Our Boards/Steering Committees** in our communities, in order to account for and value for our staff/board hours and expertise. Ideally, when we invest a little time into building NELBF, we all receive a 5x return on investment in support of our network. Encourage board members and strong volunteers to attend gatherings and conference calls.

**7. Create a Survey for NELBF Members** Asking about Impact of Buy Local Campaigns. This could be a real breakthrough for NELBF, allowing us to establish baseline measurements for our local economies, build awareness of this networked movement across New England, and promote the potential of region-wide transformation. Laury will make the effort to get it started, and talk with Stacy and Jen.

Let's go!

The next NELBF gathering will take place in April/May 2011, at a location to be determined.