

Excited About Development Coming to Old Town Clovis!

A tiny store went out of business, and I'm partly to blame.

From the start I figured the sports supplement business was doomed; its owner probably loved to work out and decided to try to make a business out of his passion.

"Do what you love" sounds great but is often just a recipe for disaster. We've all seen entrepreneurs open new ventures that we feel sure will soon go under. I'm sure you drive by a few every day, maybe even placing a mental wager on how long they will last. (My typical over/under tends to be six months.)

Like many start-up founders who go into business with big dreams and small budgets, I feel sure he did the best he could. So he probably chose a poor location because it was all he could afford, hoping quality and service would transform an out-of-the-way spot into a destination. He probably did almost no marketing due to what a surely nonexistent ad budget, hoping great word of mouth would spread the word.

I feel sure he had passion and desire in abundance and hoped hard work and persistence would overcome every challenge.

In short, like all of us, he had hope. And every day, people like me dash those hopes -- I never even stopped in his store. While it is easy to tell myself it was more convenient to shop at a large retailer, the truth is I didn't stop in because I rarely saw any cars in the parking lot. I was uncomfortable with how both of us would feel if I browsed and didn't make a purchase: him disappointed, me guilty.

Every business is an extension of its owner, and when it's struggling perspective is in short supply. You know that you're not going to make every sale, of course, but remembering that "it's not personal, it's business" is nearly impossible. We've all seen that desperation -- and that hope -- in a struggling entrepreneur's eyes. Each potential customer carries the power of validation or rejection. That's a power I didn't want but should have. I could have made a difference, however small.

We can all make a difference. Occasionally, don't just buy local. Go a step further. Buy personal.

Put aside price/value calculations and rational market theory and survival of the fittest and take a chance on a small business owner. Buy supplies from a local mom and pop. Ask the little restaurant down the road to cater a non-critical event. Call a new vendor and ask for a quote.

Do something that gives a business owner -- not a business, a business owner -- the opportunity to win you over.

What's the worst that can happen? You might spend a tiny bit more. Or your meal might not be great. Or their quote might miss the mark. That's okay. No matter what happens, be gracious. Be complimentary. Say something nice. Say thank you.

Pick a small business -- any small business -- and give it a chance. Will you keep it afloat? Of course not. Alone I couldn't have saved that store. But together we can all make a meaningful difference in our communities.

At the heart of every business is a person who has hopes and dreams. Few things are sadder than realizing your life will fall short of your dreams.

Validate someone's dream, even if that validation is fleeting.

Buy personal, and give a moment of hope to someone who desperately needs it.

I also [write for Inc.com](#):

Check out my book of personal and professional advice, **TransForm: Dramatically Improve Your Career, Business, Relationships, and Life -- One Simple Step At a Time**. ([PDF version here](#), [Kindle version here](#), [Nook version here](#).)

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