

SelfInformed

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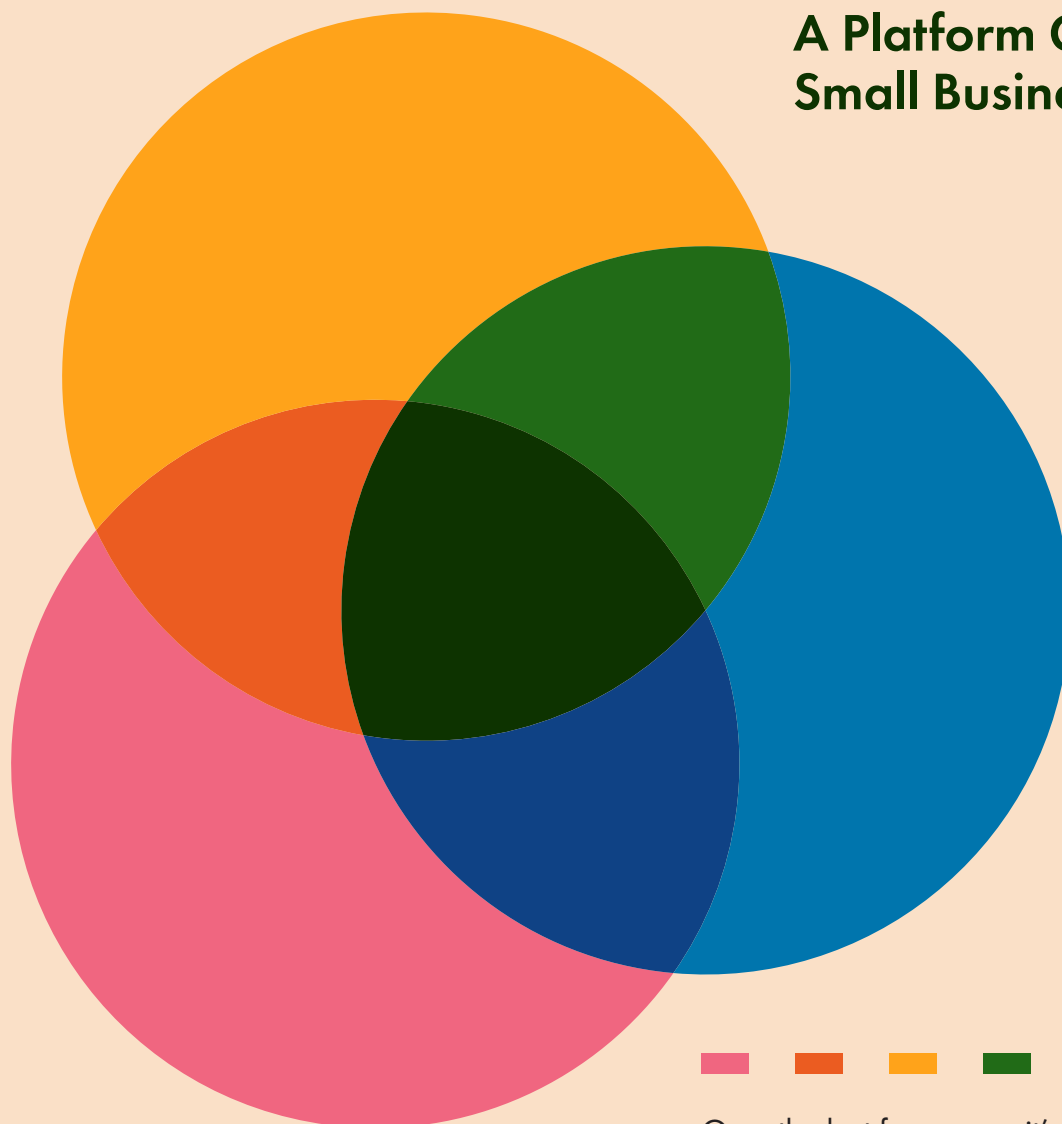
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ADDING A CREATIVE TOUCH, EFFORTLESSLY

A Platform Guide For Small Business Owners

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Over the last few years, it's become important for small businesses to add more creative visuals in their marketing strategy as a way to encourage online customer engagement and ultimately drive sales.

Fortunately, there are multiple platforms that provide the tools for small business owners to showcase their imaginative side without breaking the bank.

Here are two online platforms small businesses should consider looking into:

Canva

The perfect design tool for any skill level

With more engagement happening online, especially via social media, adding visual elements to a business marketing strategy is an easy way to draw the attention of current and potential customers.

That's where Canva comes in — an online platform and app.

Canva is a graphic design platform with thousands of templates for social media graphics, presentations, flyers, infographics and so much more. With its drag-and-drop design tools, creating visual content on the platform is intuitive and easy, opening the door to graphic design for people of any experience level. For those who have pre-existing design skills, Canva offers the option to build designs from a blank page, giving the creator more control.

It's free to use, but offers inexpensive upgraded plans

Hiring agencies to help with marketing can be expensive, and for some small businesses, this may not be a viable option. Canva makes marketing accessible to entrepreneurs with any budget, and offers a free version of the site. The free account includes hundreds of templates, stock photos and other design elements. While the free account option suffices for most businesses, it does have restrictions in terms of available content.

By upgrading to Canva Pro or Canva Teams, businesses unlock more templates, over a million stock photos, and the ability to have content automatically posted to social media channels. The Pro account also offers one place to save brand colors and additional storage space, and Canva Teams account gives more room for team collaboration. Canva Pro starts at \$14.99 a month, while Canva Teams starts at \$29.99 a month. These prices are slightly lower with annual subscriptions.

Canva also has online articles and resources covering topics such as font and color scheme decisions in branding.

Create a brand kit for consistent marketing

For businesses with the goal of brand image building, Canva offers a brand kit feature for Canva Pro subscribers. The feature allows businesses to add elements particular to their brand, such as fonts, color schemes, logos and other imagery, to be conveniently applied to all designs. This feature makes it effortless for growing businesses to highlight the uniqueness of their product, and makes it easy to stay consistent with a brand's image throughout marketing efforts.

Wix

The perfect website builder for small businesses

Expanding online presence is helpful for any micro business, and having a website can increase online visibility and reach. Wix offers free website building features, providing a growing

business the opportunity to create professional websites without any coding knowledge required. Business owners should take into consideration that while creating a website is free, these free sites will always include wixsite.com/site-name at the end of the url, unless upgraded.

Much like Canva, Wix functions as a drag-and-drop display builder with numerous templates, tutorials and customer support that aid in a business's creation of a website that captures the uniqueness of the company.

Wix is perfect for businesses with different objectives — from simple blogging to e-commerce needs.

Useful features beyond website building

Wix also has built in tools small businesses can take advantage of. It should be noted some of these features do require an upgraded membership.

Some of the features include:

E-commerce

Businesses can integrate tools to make it easy to accept payments. By connecting to Wix Payments, small businesses can manage shipping, payments and sales all in one place. This feature requires users to upgrade to the Core plan or higher, which starts at \$27 a month. In addition, businesses can connect sales made at a brick-and-mortar store with Wix Retail POS or on the move with Wix Mobile POS. All sales made online and in-person sync automatically.

SEO tools

Over the last few years, Wix has improved its infrastructure, making its built-in features align better with search engine crawlers and bots — meaning websites made on Wix now fare better in online search results.

Wix provides a search engine optimization checklist for all new websites based on the business, location and keywords. This checklist helps businesses build a foundation in SEO. In addition, for anyone wishing to understand more about SEO, Wix offers a SEO Learning Hub full of informational videos, podcasts, in-depth guides and webinars to help elevate understanding of the industry. It should be noted many SEO features are free, but to have access to indexing reports from things like Google Search Console, you'll need a premium subscription.

Analytic tools

Every single website created on Wix includes analytics, at no cost. This feature gives an advantage to businesses learning about how their customers engage with products while online. With analytics, companies can gain a better insight about their customers as well — where they may come from, how long they stay on the site and whether or not they return. Having this feature is a useful tool for

businesses hoping to understand how their product is performing, and with recommendations provided by Wix, find ways to improve their website for optimal results. There is also a phone app for small business owners who wish to check their website performance on the go.

Email marketing

On top of its many functionalities, Wix also offers email marketing services to help businesses send beautifully designed emails with Ascend by Wix. With Wix's email marketing feature, users can edit emails from several existing templates, automate campaigns and analyze results.

There is a free option available for the email service, but it does have its limits — users can only send 5,000 emails a month, along with three email campaigns, which includes the display of

Wix branding. However, Wix is much less expensive in comparison to other email marketing services, such as Mailchimp.

Takeaways from Canva and Wix

Both Wix and Canva deliver a range of features entrepreneurs can take advantage of. Their user-friendly interfaces, along with customizable templates and specs, offer businesses of every budget the chance to create professional and appealing visual content without a background in coding or design.

As more marketing strategies revolve around the output of visually attractive content online, members with NASE, or the National Association for the Self-Employed, can utilize the many resources provided — especially for social media — in developing and growing their brand.

New!



Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!



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¹ Based on network availability.

² Internet speed claims represent maximum network service capability speeds and based on wired connection to gateway. 1 GIG speeds available to new customers with the latest router (BGW320) and recommended setup. For 5 GIG speeds, single device wired speed maximum 4.7Gbps. Actual customer speeds may vary based on a number of factors and are not guaranteed. For more information, go to www.att.com/speed101.

³ Subject to availability. Optimal performance requires Wi-Fi 6 enabled devices.

⁴ Guards against known threats only. Compatible gateway and Smart Home Manager app required; security features must be enabled.



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New!



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Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!



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Using Your Library to Advance Your Small Business



As interest in self-employment and business ownership has increased, libraries have evolved to fill this need, serving a critical role in the support of small businesses and the entrepreneurs building them. Libraries, such as the **St. Louis County Library**, report saving small business owners significant money each year (check out the **American Library Association's Library Value Calculator** for more). This potential for cost savings is a national trend: Across the United States, libraries in every locality provide entrepreneur support resources of all kinds, from workshops and networking opportunities to specialized media equipment and market research.

Starting a business can be challenging even in the best of circumstances, and maintaining one is a constant effort. In this article, we will review some different ways libraries can help you confront these challenges—not just to save time, effort, and money, but also by providing local insight and helping you forge connections with your community and with fellow entrepreneurs.

Support When You're Starting Out

In developing your business, libraries have something to offer regardless of your level of experience and which steps you've already taken. Many libraries offer introductory classes for aspiring entrepreneurs, helping individuals to take their ideas and turn them into plans. The **Baltimore County Public Library**, in partnership with the **Enoch Pratt Free Library** in Maryland, operates a training program called the **Entrepreneur Academy**, a series of seven classes on topics such as business finances, marketing, recordkeeping, and strategy. Enrolling in these classes provides participants with the opportunity to engage with industry experts, including attorneys, insurance agents, and bankers. The library also provides in-person and virtual instruction, laptops, hotspots, and database access for market research and more.

Specialized Equipment

Regardless of the industry you're involved in, libraries provide specialized equipment and



technology. The **Laramie County Library System** is at the center of a statewide initiative, **Wyoming Library to Business**, to support library-to-business outreach in the state's 23 public library systems. For small business owners seeking a creative space, access to high-quality equipment, free use of business stations, and video production studios can be found through their local libraries. Video production studios can be used to produce a podcast, an audition tape, or an advertisement; to demonstrate a product in use; or to practice a pitch or announcement for your business. Similarly, **Providence Public Library** in Rhode Island offers its users makerspaces, providing equipment from printers and design software to t-shirt presses, woodcutters, button makers, and 3D printers. Many libraries across the U.S. set up spaces such as these to provide aspiring entrepreneurs with the opportunity to test-produce products and figure out what tools they need to run their business before making a purchase.

Specialized Information

For any business, having insight into the region where your business operates determines your success. For a small business, the opportunity to study local markets and populations is incredibly valuable. Libraries and library workers recognize this fact and will seek ways to make reference services available and affordable to patrons as they develop business plans. The **Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County** in New York founded its own **Business Insight Center (BIC)** to cater to this need. The BIC offers access to research sources such as IBISWorld, PitchWorld, and Frost & Sullivan, respectively helping users survey their industry, find venture capital firms, and investigate emerging technology. This reference center also provides market research reports, searches for trademarked logos, and helps review and file patent applications for free. The opportunity to obtain quality research while avoiding inconvenient or prohibitive costs makes the library an essential stop for any self-employed individual to check out.

Networking, Introductions, and Events

Small business owners at any stage benefit from being able to make connections with peers and with the business support organizations in their area. Many cities, towns, and localities are home to a Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a Chamber of Commerce, or a SCORE network, as well as a myriad of economic development organizations. Often, the library serves as an entry point to introduce new entrepreneurs to these networks or will use its spaces to host networking events or mentorship opportunities. The **Spokane County Library District** in Washington, in addition to its program series for small business owners, Small Business Boot Camp, works as a Neighborhood Champion to promote Small Business Saturdays and the Shop Small movement, and actively serves on the local Chamber of Commerce. The **Santa Barbara Public Library**, in partnership with the Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups program and the Women's Economic Ventures group, acts to connect business support organizations and high-quality resources with harder-to-reach segments of its community, including Spanish-speaking business owners and entrepreneurs.

Visit Your Library to Find Out More

With 123,000 libraries across the United States, libraries are vital connectors and hubs—convenient, accessible, and open to all. Libraries already serve as the first stop for anyone in need of a place to work, study, and learn—and are staffed by expert professionals committed to serving their communities. **To find out what your library has to offer**, make a phone call, send an email, visit their website, or just walk in through the front door!


Jim Takeshita is a Public Policy Associate with the American Library Association and helps maintain the Libraries Build Business Community, a peer-to-peer network intended for libraries as they develop small business support services.



GIVING THANKS

FOR OUR

SMALL BUSINESSES



In the rush of the holiday season that is truly upon us, I wanted to offer my thanks to the self-employed and micro-businesses owners that are a part of a strong ecosystem that is keeping the American economy humming.

For decades, the self-employed and micro-business community has been a bit of an **unsung hero of the US economy**, 27 million non-employer firms operate in the US today, or 82% of the entire small business community. It should also be noted that nearly 50% of the workforce is employed by a small business. And while accounting for such a large population of businesses, 0- 499 employees, we know that the economic power of the small business community is unmatched.

As we head into the holiday season, I hope that you will join me in celebrating the resiliency of the small business community, while we encourage you to #shopsmall year round, we hope that you will once again support your **local Small Businesses** on Saturday, November 25. Since Small Business Saturday started in 2010, consumers have spent almost \$163 billion supporting small businesses in their communities (and online!). In a **2022**



assessment of small business Saturday spending trends, American Express (the official partner of Small Business Saturday) found, *“that \$0.68 of every dollar spent at a small business in the U.S. stays in the local community and that every dollar spent at small businesses creates an additional \$0.48 in local business activity as a result of employees and local businesses purchasing local goods and services.”*

Please join me in shopping small this Saturday, for fun, I have included a few small businesses that I plan on supporting on November 25:

-  **TinyExpressions:** they have amazing fun, holiday coloring banners
-  **Creekside Farms:** artisan wreathes
-  **Brave and Kind Bookstore:** Independent bookstore in Atlanta, GA
-  **Yummy Toddler Food:** because feeding a toddler is an adventure

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