

# LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE CLIENTS

By Dawn Chafe



**B**y the time you've finished reading the next 30 pages, you'll have no doubt that *Atlantic Business Magazine* brims with unqualified admiration for small business. And no, I'm not being sarcastic (a rare feat, I know).

Thanks to our brilliant (and not even the slightest bit humble) editor, your journey starts with the wittily-titled double-page "For Starters" — a statistical salute to companies with less than 100 employees (with particular admiration reserved for the micro-enterprises of four people or less).

Then it's a quick hop to our esthetically-pleasing and informatively-entertaining feature on page 26. Remember studying the life cycle of a water drop in your elementary school science class? We've applied the same principle to explaining the even more fragile ecosystem that is private enterprise: but not only do we trace it from beginning to adolescence to maturity and beyond, we pepper the pages with helpful tips on how to prep for each phase.

The pièce de résistance is our "Mainstay of Mainstreet" series of profiles about small businesses from across the region. Here, entrepreneurs share their personal T&T stories (triumphs and... Triumphs). There are no tragedies for these intrepid junior industrialists: they uniformly saw problems as unforeseen opportunities.

Altogether, it's a downright inspiring picture about the life blood of the Atlantic economy. A well-deserved homage to the mini moguls who dominate the region's commercial scene. A literal pat on the back ... a rousing round of applause... a cheery hip-hip-hooray... a... you get the picture. We really, really, really admire small business.

Yes, we love small business. But we absolutely down-on-one knee treasure and adore the buyers: the people whose monetary support keeps our small business sector alive.

Full disclosure: my personal quality of life depends on the success of two ultra-small companies. One is my husband's home-based micro-enterprise; the other is this very magazine. (Yes, I know *Atlantic Business* looks and acts like a bigger operation, but the truth is that we produce the largest circulation and most award-winning business magazine in the region with only 10 full-time staff.)

Though representative of very different commercial sectors, these two companies are united in the way they value their customers. I've seen my husband answer panicked phone calls at 1:30 in the morning, refusing to go to sleep until he's found a solution to a seemingly

hopeless situation. I've watched our sales team comb through each edition, working side-by-side with the art department to find the "just right" placement for their clients. You'll find similar dedication in small business owners everywhere: they aren't happy until their customers are happy.

I know we live in an online culture that says local is never good enough. A culture that has convinced many of us to forgo the store down the street in order to save a dollar from an unknown retailer. A culture that insists we interact on a more impersonal but improbable social level.

But here's the thing: it's the local enterprises (over 97 per cent of which are small business) with their face-to-face relationships that support your local sports team and create local employment, that pay local taxes and fund local infrastructure. To buy local is to invest local.

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You want stronger communities? More jobs? Better roads and schools and recreation? Take a walk down the street and support the businesses whose revenue will fund those initiatives.

Maybe you're a small business yourself. Don't you want to work with someone who actually cares if you're happy with the service and product you receive? A supplier who will create custom-solutions just for you? A representative who will work through the night on your behalf? An advocate who pays personal attention to your needs? I'm not saying you should stop shopping online, but you should at least give your local small business peers the opportunity to be part of your supply chain.

As Caron Hawco says on page 13, "It's been proven that increased involvement of SMEs will result in higher competition for contracts, leading to better value for money."

Shop small business: they'll worship you for it.

Dawn Chafe started with *Atlantic Business Magazine* as a freelancer 21 years ago, becoming editor in 1998.

#### FEEDBACK

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