

A Surprising Comeback

Listen to a news feature about the revival of local stores and improve your listening skills and vocabulary on the topic.

Before you listen

Match the words with the definitions.

coffee aficionado	an analog sound storage medium in the form of a disc
artisanal	able to be shown, touched, or experienced
vinyl records	the process of becoming more active or popular again
tangible	someone who likes coffee
revival	the quality of always behaving or performing in a similar way
consistency	to welcome with open arms, to accept completely
corporate	relating to a large company
to embrace	handmade in a traditional way by someone who is skilled

Transcript

Hi, I'm Amanda Fitzgerald for Business Talk, and today we're coming to you live from the Pacific Northwest City of Seattle, Washington. I'm here with Josh Stevens, a longtime resident and a coffee aficionado. We're enjoying a great cup of coffee together, but we're not at a Starbucks. We're at Ted's Coffee Roasters, a new artisanal coffee shop near the waterfront. So, Josh, why Ted's?

Well, Starbucks opened its first coffee shop here in Seattle in 1971. Since then, Seattleites have been totally obsessed with the drink. People really do like their coffee here. But the thing that's most surprising is, despite the hundreds of chain coffee shops, small local coffee shops are actually coming back. Ted's is just one of them.

It definitely has a different vibe than Starbucks. It's incredibly cozy here. But their coffee isn't better than Starbucks. It's good, but it's probably not the reason for the trend. Am I right?

Yeah, I think you are. A lot of people are just tired of the big chains. It is local businesses they want to support now. The places that are more personal and friendly, like in the good old days. And I'm not just talking about coffee shops.

No, I know. It's immediately obvious that this trend is moving into all kinds of businesses in the area.

Right. One good example is records, you know, vinyl records for music. Little independent record stores are opening up all over the place. Vinyl is really making a comeback. Even new music is coming out on vinyl.

And these little vinyl stores are taking on big streaming services like Spotify or Pandora.

Yeah, people want to own their music again. And there's simply nothing more tangible than a record. Music and memories are strongly connected. So holding that record is kind of like holding your memories, feeling them again. What the digital revolution has taught us is physical things have value.

Which could explain the revival of local bookstores.

That's exactly right. You know, not long ago, people really did think that we'd stop buying books altogether, that everything would be digital. But just like with vinyl, people are craving something physical. It's all part of this nostalgia for the analog age, even for young people who weren't even alive then.

Huh. So actually, we're talking about two trends here. Local businesses winning out over global giants and a revival of interest in physical objects like books and records.

But they're kind of related, really. What they have in common is that desire for interaction. Coffee, books, music. It's all about that personal touch. Sure, Amazon can recommend a book to me based on some algorithm, but bookstore employees can recommend one based on a conversation we're having or just because they like it.

So local stores can surprise you.

Yeah. I mean, chain stores are all about consistency and speed, but you'll never walk out of there feeling genuinely delighted. You probably won't remember the experience at all in a few hours.

I do wonder whether this trend back to local businesses and physical objects is having an effect on the corporate world yet.

I don't know. I think it all depends on how big it gets. I hope it isn't just Seattle. I hope neighborhoods all over America embrace whatever small businesses are still alive and create a demand for more.

So you don't worry about the fate of chain stores and the corporate world?

No, no, I don't worry about that at all.

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After you listen

Can you think of any examples of a local store reviving in your area? Talk to a friend and ask for their take around the topic. Also, try to use three new words

that you have learned from the talk. As always, you can read the transcript at any time too.

