

How local businesses compete in the age of convenience

By Alexandra Spychalsky, Moonshine Ink

It is clear that we are no longer living in the heyday of the mom-and-pop shop, and rather are deep in the digital age. Why go away from home to shop when you can have groceries delivered to your door? It may sound cynical, but it's the battle waged daily by the Tahoe businesses that provide the everyday items locals need, like home goods or produce. Here local business owners explain how they compete for your dollars, and why convenience and lowest cost don't always equal the best buy.

For many local business owners, it's all about that personal connection that is unique to a mom-and-pop shop. That's what they say sets a local business apart from the big chains, and is a large reason why customers keep coming back.

Gary Romano, owner of Sierra Valley Farms in Beckwourth – just north of Sierraville – faces an uphill battle each day. The Sierra is not a very hospitable growing area, he says; the 5,000-foot elevation brings cool and rapidly changing temperatures and a soil that can only nurture certain crops. But he can pick a batch of carrots in the morning and get them to a Truckee restaurant by noon, he says, which is about as local as it gets, and he has a loyal following among the produce buyers across North Lake Tahoe.

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