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CONVERSATIONS

# A Groupon Alternative Aims to Offer Small Businesses a Better Deal

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(Page 2 of 2)

**A.** We make it easier and help them structure and manage the deal. We handle the redemption, and we gather and analyze the data, so the merchant can understand the true R.O.I. of the deal based on how much customers spent and how much of it was discounted. And we make it ridiculously affordable.

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Then we look at the longer-term R.O.I. by tracking how many new customers were brought in and whether they're being turned into loyal repeat customers by collecting their e-mail addresses with permission for the small business to contact them. We'll continue to track that longer-term R.O.I. and help our customers take advantage of it with e-mail campaigns.

From the deals that have been done with SaveLocal so far, we've seen a good R.O.I. just on the first stage, and now we're starting to see it on the second stage.

[You can read about a business that tried SaveLocal and one that chose not to at [nytimes.com/boss](http://nytimes.com/boss).]

**Q.** Not all businesses have their customers' e-mails. Can this work for a business that hasn't been collecting e-mails?

**A.** Certainly it wouldn't be starting from as strong a point as a business that has the e-mail addresses, but yes, a small business can start off SaveLocal through sharing over a social network. We believe it's important that every small business build that e-mail list, and these offers create a great incentive for customers to get on it.

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**Q.** How is your core business of e-mail-based marketing holding up? Is it being replaced by social-media marketing?

**A.** We do help customers with social-network campaigns, but e-mail is still one of the fundamental channels of communication. Facebook just released the statistic that on average [only 12 percent](#) of the people that “like” a page see a new message from the page owner show up in their news feed. The typical small business only has about 100 people who like their page, which means a total of 12 people are seeing the message. The typical small business has more than 2,000 names on an e-mail list. It wouldn’t be smart to stop communicating to those 2,000 people in order to focus on the 100 people they might be able to reach on Facebook.

« [PREVIOUS PAGE](#) 1 | 2

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