

Helping Local Businesses Retain & Expand Sales in Bishop, CA

COMMUNITY

Bishop, California

THE CHALLENGE

"I'm going to Lancaster to pick up groceries."
"We're going to Reno for back-to-school clothes and supplies."
"That store just caters to the tourists. Too expensive for us!"

Those statements have long been a part of daily conversation in Bishop, a town in the Eastern Sierra region of California. "Both the City of Bishop and the Chamber felt like we were definitely losing a lot of business to surrounding communities," said Tawni Thomson, Executive Director of the Bishop Chamber of Commerce. "But we needed to quantify that loss to help our existing businesses better respond to consumer needs and keep sales tax dollars at home."

THE SOLUTION

The City of Bishop retained The Retail Coach to perform a comprehensive Retail Market Study that included a Retail Gap/Opportunity Analysis.

The Retail Coach determined that Bishop was losing more than \$149 million in sales to other communities. Some of the retail sectors with the greatest leakages were groceries, lawn and garden, hardware, home electronics, home furnishings, new and used car dealerships and restaurants.

"We also identified a divide between the retail community and consumers in Bishop," said C. Kelly Cofer, CEO of The Retail Coach. "There was a feeling that local businesses cater primarily to the seasonal tourist trade with more upscale, expensive offerings. This created dissatisfaction among Bishop's residents who felt prices weren't competitive, selections were limited and the customer service they received was poor."

THE RESULTS

While the findings caused discomfort in the community between business owners and consumers, the outcome has been positive. "The study opened a dialogue that we needed to have," said Tawni. "While owners may not have liked what they heard at first, it was an eye opener. They realized that they needed to sharpen their game."

This new awareness combined with an improving economy has triggered positive momentum in Bishop. Existing stores, restaurants, hotels and motels have invested in improvements such as new equipment, renovations and expanded product lines. New businesses like Holy Smoke Texas Style BBQ and Reagan's Sporting Goods have also opened.

"Our intention was to use The Retail Coach's study as a business retention tool," said Tawni. "But another benefit is the communication tool it has proven to be for local property owners and real estate brokers. We have provided the Retail Coach report to the new owners of a long vacant shopping center in hopes that they will use the information to attract great tenants."

Tawni has also shared the study with more than a dozen investors who traveled through Bishop and became interested in the community for future businesses. "I am fairly confident that within the next twelve months we will see new retailers and restaurants as a direct result of The Retail Coach's work in Bishop."



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