



**THIS IS**

# Small Business

**Build It  
Future Strong**

**Tales of Triumph  
finalists**

New customers  
may be just around  
the corner – literally

Packaging with  
the planet in mind



SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESS  
**NEW**  
2021

“A small business  
is an amazing  
way to serve and  
leave an impact  
on the world  
you live in.”

Nicole Snow



Welcome to  
*This Is Small Business.*

**Small businesses are continually shifting and innovating to stay relevant to their customers. In our inaugural issue of *This Is Small Business*, we recognize and celebrate their successes.**

This first issue offers a unique mix of tips and advice, pragmatism and inspiration. You will find features on ecommerce, sustainable packaging and returns – but it is the stories of Canadian small businesses that dominate.

We hope that, in their success, you will find the insights and tools to “Build It Future Strong”!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Doiron".

**Danielle Doiron**  
General Manager, Marketing  
Canada Post

# Tales of Triumph.

**Every small business has a big story.**

Tales of Triumph was created by Canada Post in 2020 to recognize and celebrate the resilience of our nation's small businesses.

The contest was so successful, we brought it back for a second year. Here are some of the finalists who revamped – and even reinvented – their business strategies for future success.

We hope their stories inspire you to build your own business future strong.



Learn more at  
[canadapost.ca/  
SMBmagazine](https://canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine)

## Breakthrough Marketing

# Making the jump from generating sales to building communities.



**Tales of Triumph finalists discuss what it takes to create a community of passionate customers.**

Necessity is the mother of invention, as the saying goes. For many Canadian small businesses, recent times have given them multiple opportunities to reinvent their approach to advertising and marketing.

Plant Gather, Prairie Soap Shack and Watergirl Quilt Co. are three homegrown small businesses that are successfully building communities of loyal customers and fans.

**What can you learn from these small, but mighty, marketers?**

## Breakthrough Marketing

### Plant Gather: Watch It Grow.

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Founded shortly after the onset of the pandemic, Plant Gather of Richmond, British Columbia, is a family-proud business that sells rare tropical houseplants from coast to coast.

**“In a period of social isolation, plants have served a valuable therapeutic function for many experiencing stress.”**

– Melissa (Co-Founder)

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Plant Gather may be a small business, but even marketing powerhouses can draw inspiration from its innovative, multi-channel approach to connecting with communities of consumers.

The company’s strategy includes lots of social media, such as daily posts, ads, online plant-growing lessons and contests on Instagram and Facebook.



Direct mail invites customers to post videos of themselves unboxing their new plants.

Creating a legion of Brand Ambassadors from among satisfied customers has also been a goal from day one. According to Jennifer, Plant Gather’s other co-founder, “Our ambassadors have been tremendous, creating instructional videos, offers and contests. We truly could not have done it without them.”

All of this contributes to Plant Gather’s growing marketing ecosystem while enriching the lives of customers and team alike with a literal breath of fresh air!

### Prairie Soap Shack: Inspiration from the past powers timely marketing communications.

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Prairie Soap Shack of Elnora, Alberta, takes inspiration from the past and the plants of the prairies to create innovative all-natural skin and body care products. Founder Jess Mose is the consummate owner-marketer, taking inspiration wherever she can find it.

“I have joined a few online communities for small businesses in Canada, and I learned an important tactic to market through social media and online is to show the whole process of my business and behind the scenes.”

She is active on Instagram and Facebook, and writes a blog to help create conversations and broaden her community of loyalists. These are complemented by regular email marketing campaigns.

**“Similarly, high-quality photography is important because customers are making purchasing decisions on how products look on social media and websites.”**

– Jess

Video has been key to customer engagement. “I make my own products, so I create fun videos showing me pouring soap, and telling stories. People want to see the maker and what goes into the products they are ordering online.”

Prairie Soap Shack has generated tremendous buzz since its launch. Jess’s passion project has been featured in *Prairie Living*, *House & Garden*, *TrailblazHer*, *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*.

“I feel people are really connecting with my brand. They tell me they are ‘lifetime customers’ and that they are sharing my products with their family and friends!”



## Breakthrough Marketing

# Watergirl Quilt Co.: Stitching together a community of fans.

Watergirl Quilt Co. is an online and brick-and-mortar business located along the St. Lawrence River, in Eastern Ontario. Its reputation – and revenue – has grown exponentially and now includes quilters from around the world.

Owner Michelle Peters started the business to “ignite creativity, educate and support a diverse group of quilters by providing high-quality products, workshops, tutorials and expert advice from our passionate and fun team.”

The business was launched during the first wave of lockdowns in Ontario. “Our original marketing plan was to be a vendor at all the local quilt shows. Unfortunately, all of the events were cancelled.”

Her solution was to immediately create daily Facebook Live videos to generate leads. Michelle demonstrates products, quilting techniques and encourages viewers to join the private Facebook group to create a community of quilters, sharing ideas and learning together.

Many quilters had never shopped online before the pandemic because purchasing fabric is a very tactile experience.

“To reduce our customers’ resistance to purchasing fabric online, we innovated and created virtual shop tours and video shopping appointments. We also developed a landing page where customers could request a free swatch packet of our fabrics, to make their online shopping experience less stressful.”

Quilters are kept engaged through regular social media posts, polls, surveys and contests.

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**“We get lots of word-of-mouth referrals because quilters LOVE to share when they have found a great quilt shop.”**

– Michelle



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Creating a welcoming and inclusive brand has paid off big time. “Within the first nine months, our online sales had quadrupled.”

Building a community of fans around your small business can be a competitive advantage. Your tactics may differ from those used by our three finalists, but the goal will likely be the same: Customers and potential customers who feel engaged, heard and appreciated, so they’ll keep coming back over and over again.

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### Support and follow these amazing small businesses:

Plant Gather  
[@plantgather](#)  
[PlantGather.com](#)

Prairie Soap Shack  
[@prairiesoapshack](#)  
[PrairieSoapShack.com](#)

Watergirl Quilt Co.  
[@watergirlquiltco](#)  
[WatergirlQuiltCo.com](#)

# Mobile Escape: Discovering a new way forward.



**Mobile Escape**  
Calgary, Alberta  
MobileEscape.ca  
@mobile\_escape

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**“When they announced they were closing schools, we were stunned. I sat on the floor in my basement with my head in my hands.”**

– Eric

Mobile Escape of Calgary, Alberta, was started in 2016 by brothers-in-law Paul Harvey and Eric Reynolds. The business creates “escape rooms,” a gaming experience in which teams of players achieve specific goals by investigating clues and solving puzzles in one or more rooms.

At the beginning, this meant towing large cargo trailers, custom-designed to contain escape rooms, to events across Alberta. A whopping 90 per cent plus of revenue came from provincial schools.

Then the pandemic hit, and this critical customer base was literally shut down. But Mobile Escape wasn’t going down without a fight.

“We’ve rebuilt our company with an innovative new mail-order product called Escape Mail, which consists of 12 episodes that people around the world can play, often over Zoom. The response has been phenomenal,” says Eric.



Mobile Escape also upgraded its online presence, built a web store and integrated a more advanced shipping capacity.

**“We send the majority of our envelopes with Canada Post. Free shipping is offered anywhere in North America.”**

– Eric

The co-founders have made customer service a priority. “We reply to every customer review, answer every phone call and reply to every social media message,” says Eric.

Since reinventing itself, Mobile Escape games have been sold to customers in dozens of countries, most U.S. states and every Canadian province and territory.

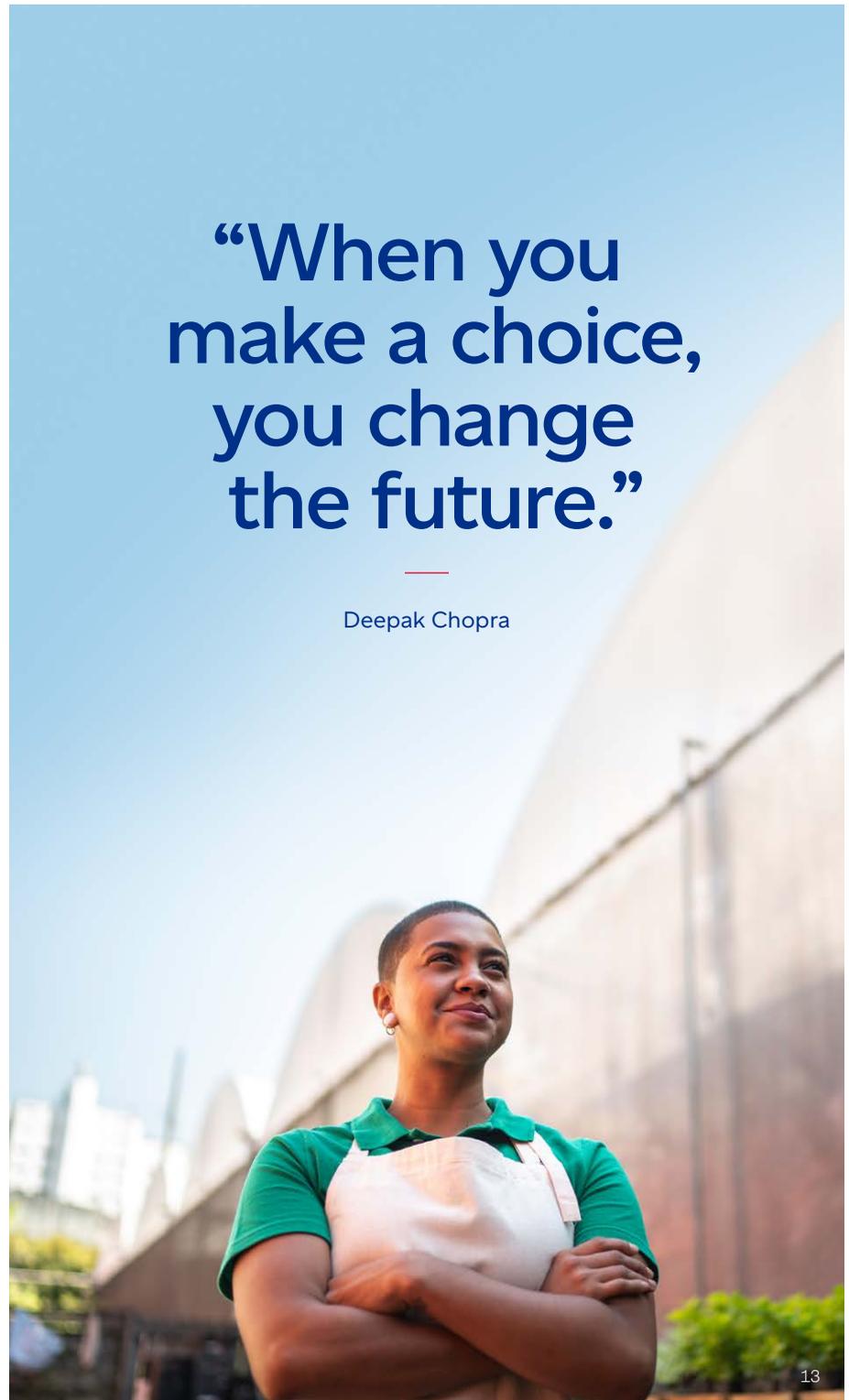
And Mobile Escape continues to break new ground. It has licensing agreements with companies in the U.K., Germany and the Netherlands.

“We have come a long way from our modest beginnings. Mobile Escape today is truly a global mail-order puzzle – and we still bring the escape room to our customers!” says Paul proudly.



**“When you make a choice, you change the future.”**

—  
Deepak Chopra



# Bold Women. Entrepreneurs.

## Two inspiring women working for the well-being of all.

In 2017, Erica Lebrun and Olivia Elting founded the company Mme L'Ovary. The two friends worked together to create washable menstrual panties that over 25,000 women in Canada, the United States and Europe wear today.

It all started on a Barcelona beach when Olivia saw a disposable sanitary napkin floating in the water. Disgusted, she said to herself, "You must do something!"

Despite extensive research, she failed to find an eco-friendly alternative to disposable pads. Olivia took action and created her own prototype: menstrual underwear with three washable and reusable pads. A few years later, Erica discovered the ingenious underwear. One thing led to another, and soon the company was founded and began to grow.

Mme L'Ovary now offers a complete range of menstrual underwear for daytime and nighttime use that are adapted to customers' needs.

**Mme L'Ovary**  
Montreal, Quebec  
mmelovary.com  
@mmelovary

**"We are looking ahead.  
Our education and social  
mission is to bring about  
positive and lasting change  
in our society."**

– Erica and Olivia



### When the round table turns red

At the beginning of COVID-19, Mme L'Ovary launched Red Tables, an inclusive, virtual conversation space dedicated to topics often considered taboo.

The goal? To bring people together during this uncertain time and, above all, to spread a more positive message about women's health. Today, Red Tables brings together an average of 200 people per event.

"We are looking ahead. Our education and social mission is to bring about positive and lasting change in our society," said Erica and Olivia.

And there's even more: The company also supports Monthly Dignity, an association that aims to improve access to menstrual products for people with low incomes.

### A ton of effort for zero waste

Olivia and Erica also developed Operation #Zero-Waste in collaboration with Incita. This co-op provides zero-waste strategic consulting services. They worked together to present recommendations on how to reduce single-use menstrual products.

The initiative garnered over

14,000 signatures and is part of Montreal's 2020–2025 *Master Plan for Residual Materials Management*.

### For a better future

Mme L'Ovary is an excellent example of a homegrown enterprise that is involved in its community, succeeding in business and contributing to the well-being of our planet. It's the inspiring story of two young entrepreneurs who wanted to "weave together a greener, more sensitive new world."

**Their mission:**  
**To reduce waste and spread a positive message about women's health.**



# How to Ship: The Basics.

## Learn how to get your products shipped efficiently and reliably.

Do you want to delight your customers when they receive your products in the mail? Are you looking to spend less and save time on your shipping process for your business?

Join Pow Wow Pitch Founder, Sunshine Tenasco, and Jeff Gopaul, Canada Post's Manager of Parcels and eCommerce Solutions Integration, for everything you need to deliver amazing experiences.

Canada Post is proud to support Pow Wow Pitch. This grassroots community of Indigenous entrepreneurs across Turtle Island provides a safe, collaborative, supportive and empowering platform for inspiration, education, mentorship, celebration and reconciliation through entrepreneurship.

**Watch How to Ship now at [canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine](https://canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine)**



# Packaging with the planet in mind.

**36%**

**of online shoppers will shop more from retailers that promote an environmental cause.\***

Sustainability is a goal that everyone can get behind. Online shoppers in particular want the packaging they receive from online sellers to be easily recyclable.

In fact, 63 per cent of respondents in a Canada Post survey indicated that it upsets them when a retailer uses excessive or unnecessary packing material.\*

Fortunately, there are a number of ways in which you can reduce your environmental impact.

## **Go with recyclable packaging**

You'll find plenty of packaging made from recyclable or compostable materials, including biodegradable cello tape.

## **Make your mark with eco-friendly inks**

Soy-based inks don't use petroleum-based compounds like traditional inks.

## **Use the right size box**

Avoid sending small things in big boxes. There's the clear size discrepancy, which may concern customers, plus you're likely using too much filler material, too.

## **Is a box even necessary?**

Eliminating boxes altogether may reduce the environmental impact – and your shipping costs, too. If your product is lightweight, small or soft, consider alternatives like a poly mailer.



**When you do have more sustainable packaging in place, be proud of your achievement.**

Feature this feel-good messaging on your homepage, in your marketing communications and anywhere else it makes sense.

## **We're also reducing our environmental impact.**

Canada Post recognizes that the strength of our relationship with Canadians is shaped by more than delivery. We're working hard to live up to your expectations, including investments in the area of sustainability.

**Read more about these efforts at [canadapost.ca/ForThePlanet](https://canadapost.ca/ForThePlanet)**

\*Canada Post. 2021 Canadian Online Shopper Study, CPC 19-201, April 2021.

\*Canada Post. A New Narrative – Connecting to Canada Post, 2018.

# Partake Brewing: Cheers to doubling sales.

**Calgary-based non-alcoholic beer company saw its sales grow 100% in only one month.**

After he was diagnosed with a medical condition that precluded him from drinking alcohol, Ted Fleming sought a satisfying non-alcoholic beer that would allow him to maintain the interactions that come with social beer drinking. But there was a distinct lack of variety in the non-alcoholic beer market. So he decided to do something about it by founding Partake Brewing in 2017.

The brewery, nominated for best online start-up at the Canada Post Ecommerce Innovation Awards in 2019, is now one of the leading craft non-alcoholic beer companies in North America. In March 2021, Partake experienced 100% growth in sales and shipments of its craft beer.



**Partake Brewing**  
Calgary, Alberta  
DrinkPartake.com

## **Massive growth prompts a rethink.**

This explosion of new customers led the company to seek out shipping solutions that could keep up with its new high-volume load.

After signing up for a ShipStation trial, Partake was impressed with the software's ease of use and integrations, namely the ability to work seamlessly with Canada Post, the brewery's sole shipping partner.

With an emphasis on ecommerce sales in recent years, Partake relies heavily on Canada Post to deliver products effectively, plus working with responsive support staff is always a bonus.

"We access Canada Post through integration with ShipStation that allows us to manage order flow and shipping from one simple platform," says Ted. "First, orders are funnelled through the ShipStation platform and allocated to the appropriate warehouse for fulfillment. From there, shipping labels are printed and packages are handed off to Canada Post for delivery."

## **As sales grow, the need for simplicity becomes more important.**

In developing its online store, Partake knew it needed a solution that would allow the company to streamline communication and fulfillment.

"The real-time tracking page allows us to maximize visibility on our outgoing orders and communicate with the warehouse seamlessly. Printing packing slips, managing orders and shipping in one centralized platform allows us to manage thousands of orders every month with great efficiency."

## **A word of advice.**

If Fleming could offer one piece of advice to fellow small but growing businesses, it's this: "Find a simple and easy-to-use platform that can bridge communication between ecommerce staff and warehouse locations. It may take some learning and adapting upfront, but it will pay off in the long run."

# Propel business growth by finding new customers.

Learn how to market your small business to the right audience online and offline.

New customers can come from anywhere – word of mouth, an online search, a lucky find. But as a small business, you can't leave customer acquisition to chance. Finding new customers is a process. Here's where you start.

## 1 Create an ideal customer profile.

Start by determining what they're looking for – supplies for pets, makeup, craft beer, home décor and so on. But your profile must also go deeper. What are their pain points? Why are they choosing you instead of another business? What are their interests?

## 2 Examine your sales and shipping data.

Your best-selling products can tell you what customers really want from your business. For example, sales data could identify your best customers as being women who live in urban areas and place online orders after 10 p.m.

## 3 Analyze where your customers live.

People who live in the same geographic area often share attributes. Postal code data can give you a sense of a neighbourhood's average household income, age, marital status and more. All of this can help inform your marketing strategies and messages.

## 4 Target your ideal customer.

Here are some tips to help you connect with customers online and offline:

- **Find your customers on social media.** You can tailor and target social media ads and boosted posts – serving them to particular users filtered by location, interests and demographics.
- **Sponsor or join community events.** Consider supporting schools, charities, religious institutions and local business associations that overlap with your interests – and your customers'.

- **Try Neighbourhood Mail™.** Print campaigns allow you to target specific audiences in different areas within walking or driving distance of your brick-and-mortar location. But a print campaign could also support your online store, driving traffic to your site.

No matter how successful your business becomes, you'll always be looking for new customers to move you forward. By using your current data to build the foundation of a detailed customer profile, you're setting yourself up for a strong future.

**Discover how we can help you find new customers at [canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine](https://canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine)**



# Your Return Policy: Master the balancing act.



**The secret to optimizing your return policy is balancing costs and customer benefits.**

Today's online shoppers think nothing of ordering multiple products and returning what they don't want. It's frustrating – but also reality.

The good news: Convenient returns drive conversions, reduce abandoned carts, increase average order values and build customer loyalty. But they do come with potential risks.

Make them too convenient, and return costs could grow faster than you expect. Make them too restrictive, and you could miss purchase opportunities. So how do you strike a balance between the costs and benefits? Here are a few of our top tips.



## **Put customers first.**

The easier and more seamless the experience is for your customers, the more they'll want to do business with you. Simplicity and convenience help make customers feel safe, eliminating friction from a purchase decision.

## **Leverage the potential of your return policy with effective messaging.**

If you're making your return policy even remotely difficult to access, read or understand, think about ways to make it accessible and user-friendly. Keep the nuts-and-bolts stuff to the fine print – that's what it's for.

## **Get the most out of free and paid support resources.**

There's a whole range of options between D.I.Y. and professional help to substantially improve your return processes and policy without paying an arm and a leg. Consider one of the online return policy builders.

Canada Post's Return Policy Builder will help you create a policy tailored to the needs of your business. You'll get access to legal terms and conditions, and learn how your customers can print return labels from your website, and more.

## **Start building your return policy at [canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine](https://canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine)**



# Stay in step with your customers.

## The latest research sheds light on shifting consumer expectations.

Canada Post surveyed 3,000 online shoppers to see how the pandemic has changed their shopping behaviour. The research results could help you respond today – and even hone your game plan tomorrow.

### How and where they're buying.

**60%** indicate they now try to support Canadian businesses and small businesses in their neighbourhood (49%) since the pandemic started. That's an invitation for you to flash your Canuck roots.

**89%** report that they have made an online purchase that required delivery of a package or parcel within the past year.

**28%** say they will no longer go to shopping malls even when they are open or they will avoid going in store to shop. The takeaway? An online presence is critical to business success moving forward.



### How they're engaging with advertising.

**53%** of respondents who receive flyers indicate they are as equally likely to read or flip through them whether they arrive on their doorstep or in their mailbox.



Flyers are the most likely to prompt a visit to a retail store for a product of interest and help remember a product or service.

**33%** say they are more likely to read or flip through flyers if they are in their mailbox compared to those that arrive on the doorstep (15%).



Advertising received by email is the most likely to get people to browse an online store for a product of interest.

**The bottom line:** Today's small businesses simply cannot put all of their promotional dollars into one communication basket. Successful marketers leverage two, three and more channels to connect with consumers.

**Interested in more consumer insights for your business?**  
Visit [canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine](https://canadapost.ca/SMBmagazine)

**Sources:** 2021 Canadian Online Shopper Study, CPC 21-205, April 2021.  
2021 Canada Post Spring Survey, 21-211, June 2021.