

Back In Business

(NAPSA)—Five years after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, small-business owners in the region are embracing the notion that good can come from devastation. Grateful that people all around the world are helping to rebuild and revive the region, one surviving company is reminding the world that New Orleans is open for business.

Silk Road Collection, a New Orleans-based seller of antique Chinese furniture, lost most of its customer base when Hurricane Katrina shattered tourism in the region. They needed to find new sources of clients and revenue. Then Yahoo! Small Business sent a team of volunteers to the region to help Gulf Coast businesses get back on their feet. The team built 150 online stores for free in one day, including an online store for Silk Road Collection. Today, online sales account for 80 percent of overall sales for this Asian antiques company.

“The anniversary of Hurricane Katrina is an ideal time to remind people that New Orleans is back in business,” said Donald St. Pierre, co-owner of Silk Road Collection. “With the spotlight back on our beloved city, we want to remind the world that it can still support New Orleans in its revitalization by visiting us and by shopping with local online merchants.”

Lessons Learned Over Five Years

Even five years after Hurricane Katrina, Silk Road Collection will never forget the volunteers from Yahoo! Small Business who created its online store and helped put it back in business.

“We are thankful to everyone who helped New Orleans over the last five years, so we want to share the business lessons we’ve learned since opening our online store,” said Robert Turner, co-owner of Silk Road Collection. Tips include:



A New Orleans-based antique furniture seller wants to remind the world that the Gulf Coast is back in business.

- Pursue your passion. Whether you’re starting a new business or looking to fine-tune your existing one, you’ll be more successful if you sell products and services you love. The enthusiasm will be contagious!

- Seek trusted advisers and partners. From your website to your accounting services, seek the help of trusted brands and trusted advisers.

- If you’re starting a new business, consider minimizing the startup costs. Online storefronts can cost as little as \$40/month to start up.

- Communicate with your customers. Make sure you capture e-mail and physical addresses, when possible, to enable you to develop long-term relationships with your customers. Should disaster strike, as it did for Silk Road, having e-mail addresses would still allow you to communicate with your customers, even if they moved, as did many residents after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their homes.

- Make sure customers can find you. Today, having a website and being listed on local online sites is a must for businesses whose customers want to be able to research them online.

Learn More

Learn more at smallbusiness.yahoo.com and SilkRoadCollection.com.