

Best Little Guide helps South Africans shop local

By  Lauren Hartzenberg

23 Sep 2020

The call for South Africans to support local brands has been amplified in 2020, with the dire need to restore the country's economy and replace the jobs lost during the Covid-19 lockdown.



Small businesses have faced the worst of these challenges, so to help drive support for them Leigh Tobin and her team at marketing consultancy Alphabet Social developed the Best Little Guide (BLG), a handy new online platform to help consumers easily discover locally-made products and services.

The guide showcases a wide range of small local businesses across categories including fashion, home and decor, fitness and lifestyle, food and beauty. It also features a Stories tab, which profiles the talented people behind the brands listed on the platform.

BLG began as a simple listing page on Alphabet Social's website, but has quickly evolved into a portal with over 500 small South African brands and businesses. The goal is to make it easier than ever to find and support small business, by bringing them all together under one curated virtual roof.



Leigh Tobin

Here, Tobin shares more on the idea behind Best Little Guide and the importance of supporting small local businesses in 2020.

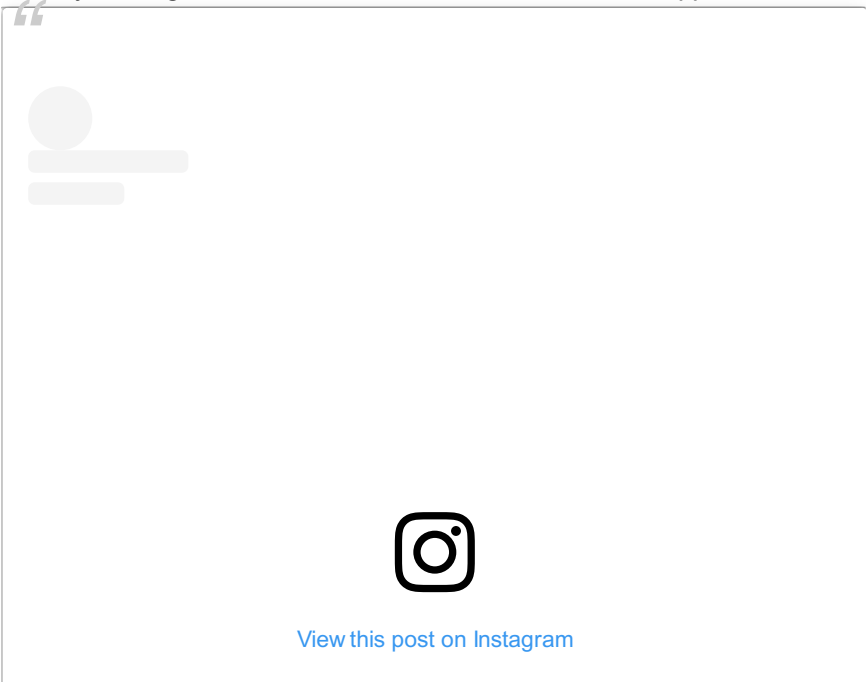
■ Could you tell us what inspired the Best Little Guide, and what drove its evolution from a simple listing page on Alphabet Social to a fully-fledged online platform?

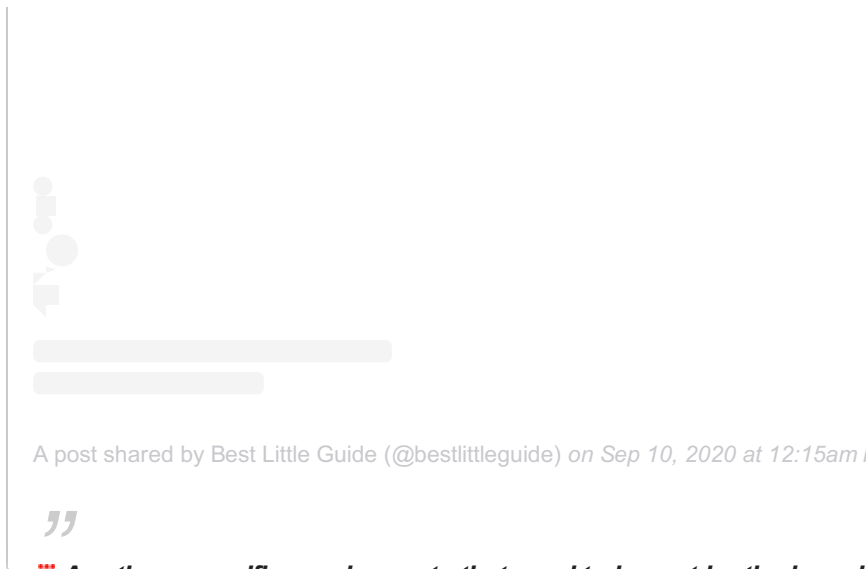
During my ‘day job’ I run a digital marketing consultancy called [Alphabet Social](#), where I work primarily with female small business owners to help them grow their business online. Through my courses and workshops, I met and encountered many wonderful business owners.

Then, when Covid-19 hit I felt really helpless and wanted to do something to support all the small businesses that were being impacted. I got to work just listing all the businesses I knew on my existing website and sharing it with my email list and on social. The response was amazing!

“ The Best Little Guide idea was also born out of a personal frustration I had with wanting to support local but not knowing all the options that were out there, or where to find them. ”

So, Best Little Guide was the solution to this problem – for local businesses to be all in one place, under one virtual roof, thereby making it easier for consumers to discover and support local.





A post shared by Best Little Guide (@bestlittleguide) on Sep 10, 2020 at 12:15am PDT

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Are there specific requirements that need to be met by the brands featured in the guide?

They need to be proudly South African brands and businesses and generally 'small' in that they have a turnover of less than R10m per annum. It also has to be easy for users to shop from these brands either via a website or physical store presence.

I love that there are profiles on each of the brands that appear on the platform. Why did you believe these stories were important to convey?

This is the best part! The stories behind the businesses bring to life the real people you are supporting when you support a small, local business. We want to add a human face to these brands so that when people shop local, they make the connection – shopping local improves people's lives through job creation and opportunity!

There is often so much creativity and thought that goes into the process. If we only focus on the finished product, so much beauty will be missed.



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Can you speak to the importance of supporting small, local brands right now, and the far-reaching impact this has on SA and its people?

Recently I shared a post on social media that said "Not supporting local is a crime." The post went viral, as I really think it struck a chord with our local businesses who are working so hard to create jobs and opportunities for people and who are frustrated at trying to convince fellow South Africans to shop local.

Often this needs some explaining as people don't usually link shopping local with crime. But the unemployment rate in South Africa is sky-high. So too, is the crime rate. The two are intrinsically linked and while we don't have the power to change government policy (until an election), we DO have purchasing power; and that power is BIG.

The more we choose to use that power to support big corporates and mass-market products, the more we basically fuel the unemployment rate and thereby the crime rate. Why? Because small businesses are the job creators and lifeblood of an economy.

So many people are in a position to be positively influenced by the choice to support local. The far reaching benefits are often beyond comprehension and don't always cross our minds when we are standing in the grocery aisle choosing what to buy for dinner.

“ With Best Little Guide, we are trying to encourage people to be more conscious of shopping local when they decide to buy something. And never has this been more crucial than right now, in our post-pandemic world when so many people are struggling to get by. ”

📌 **Name some of your personal favourite local brands and tell us what you love about them.**

Oh this is such a tough question! It's like asking to pick your favourite child! I'd need a whole hour (or more realistically, a day) to chat about my favourite local brands - I think that's why the Best Little Guide has categories as it makes it easier to navigate through your faves.

BUT to be fair, I'm going to list the 3 brands I've shopped from in the past month:

[Good To Gather](#) for their incredible food boxes that are created with the utmost care and attention to detail, all sourced from local suppliers and farmers so the positive benefits are expanded into other small businesses too, which I love. It's delivered every Friday morning and really gets my weekend off to the best start - especially the home-baked tea cake by Jess!

[Hannah Lavery](#) for her beautiful clothing. I recently purchased a pair of her leather shoes that are just the most comfortable shoes I've ever worn!

[Bena Woman](#) - I wouldn't have survived lockdown without Xan's amazing track sets! They make lounging at home SO comfy and come in an array of cool colours.

[Matter of Fakt jewellery](#) - I recently purchased a gorgeous set of earrings from Mary-Anne at Matter of Fakt - all hand forged in Cape Town and inspired by the ocean and sandy beaches!

See that's four! I can't help myself!

📌 **What is your ultimate vision for the Best Little Guide?**

When anyone in South Africa wants to buy something, I want them to think of going to Best Little Guide to find it. If you are buying a gift, looking for a wedding ring or shopping around for some clothing, I want people to see BLG as their destination for supporting local. I want it to be South Africa's go-to platform, the 'Google', for finding and supporting local brands and learning about the people behind them.

Ultimately, I want Best Little Guide to benefit as many small businesses as possible through story-telling, awareness and marketing.



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Lauren Hartzenberg 22 Sep 2020



📌 **As a seasoned marketer, any growth hacks or top tips you can offer small, local businesses hoping to survive and thrive during this uncertain time?**

“ Always keep learning, adapting and trying newthings! And expand your marketing knowledge. ”

It's all good and well having a wonderful product or service, but if you don't know how to find the right market for it or tell the

story in a way your audience cares about, then it's going to be tough to drive sales. Digital marketing makes it easier than ever to build a following and build a connection with an audience to ultimately drive sales.

I've actually created a course recently that does just that - empowers small business owners with the knowledge to grow their business using social media. Giving small businesses the tools to succeed online is something I am very passionate about! Digital is a great democratiser. You can be Coca-Cola or a corner shop, and both have access to over 2 billion people on Facebook and 1 billion on Instagram.

The world is your oyster! Go and get 'em!

Browse the [Best Little Guide online](#) and connect with the brand on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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