



The Shopkeepers: Storefront Businesses

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Good stores still exist. In fact, their number is growing. Well-designed specialty shops that are inspired by the small manufacturers and mom-and-pop operations of the past are now sprouting up. These outlets are defying e-commerce and anonymous online shopping with outstanding products, original interior design, innovative concepts, and, first and foremost, friendly and competent customer service.

The Shopkeepers explores this new store culture through examples such as barber shops, fish smokeries, tailors, and milliners, as well as retail spaces specializing in stationery, hardware, buttons, home décor, or coffeemakers. They can be found off the beaten track as well as in the hearts of major cities from Berlin to Beirut. The book makes it clear that they are all driven by the passion that their founders and operators have for their business ideas and products, whether vintage eyeglasses, textiles from India or China, specialty books, soaps, olive oils, or tropical fish. While some shops are based on innovative ideas, others are reinterpretations of traditional family businesses.

The Shopkeepers also introduces some of the personalities behind these exciting retail concepts. Many have been running their shops for years but are only now being recognized by a new generation of consumers for their acumen, integrity, and knowledge ?from shoemakers who truly understand their craft to culinary experts who can differentiate between 200 types of chocolate or cheese with their eyes closed.

Some are such interesting characters that the chance to interact with them is reason enough to attract potential customers. In the stores featured in *The Shopkeepers*, the customer is again king and can find a personal, quality retail experience that the internet simply cannot provide. The book reminds us all of the value of exceptional service and of meticulously selected products which are built to last and on which one can depend. If they didn't exist already, they do now.

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