

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

Acres of Diamonds

The man was diagnosed with cancer, but he wasn't about to give up.

The local gentleman searched the world over for the most renowned cancer hospitals he could find. He settled on the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, a famous facility in Texas where some of the finest doctors had done amazing work with similar tumors.

He flew down to Texas and underwent a thorough physical, after which the doctor told him to go home.

"Home?" the shocked patient cried. "I flew down here for your treatment, and now you're telling me to go home? Is it that bad?"

"Not at all," the doctor said reassuringly. "We have the finest and most up-to-date radiation equipment money can buy, and we believe it can help you. But you already have one of these machines in your own home town."

Seems that one of our local hospitals in Kankakee County has the very same radiation technology that they had in Texas. In fact, the same installation crew that had put in the medical equipment in Texas was in Kankakee exactly one day before, installing the very same piece of equipment.

A local race car driver looks high and low for a custom-made trailer to haul his ride... and learns, to his surprise and delight, that some of the very best race trailers in the world are manufactured in Herscher.

A local contractor is building an executive home, and needs a specially-designed concrete patio. He looks on the Web and finds a subcontractor for the unique product... right here in Kankakee.

Earl Nightingale called it the "Acres of Diamonds". The Bradley-Bourbonnais Chamber of Commerce calls it "Buy Local, Hire Local." When we buy outside of our community, we sometimes miss the excellent products and services that our friends and neighbors provide.

And in today's economy, it's more important than ever to consider these diamonds that are available in our own backyards.

Here are some thoughts to consider when buying a product or service of any kind from outside of the immediate area:

- Before buying it, ask yourself, “Could I buy this same product from someone in my area at a comparable price?” If the answer is yes, reconsider.
- If it’s an item that may require service, ask yourself if the company you’re buying it from will service the product where you live. If it’s an inconvenience to get a product fixed, it’s suddenly not a bargain any more.
- Do you have reason to trust the seller? Are there references, testimonials from others who have bought from this seller, or is it simply something you thought you’d like to own that the seller just happens to have?
- Can you reward someone locally that’s done business with you by giving them your business? If you can, you should.
- If you find a product that you really want or need, bring a description of the item to a local resource, and ask them if they can match the item and price for you. If not, let them suggest comparable options that they can provide. There may be a cheaper, more sensible option that you hadn’t even considered. You may still buy the item from somewhere else, but you’ve at least made an effort to give a local person a shot at the business.

We all have done our fair share of impulse shopping outside of our own borders. And at times, we’ve even criticized our area for not having a particular retail store or favorite restaurant. I do believe, however, that it’s time for each of us to revisit the economic equivalent of “love your neighbor.”

There are many local resources that deliver genuine value for your money, and price is only one dimension of overall value. It’s not our job to keep everyone in business, but it is our responsibility to the place that we live to give local providers every opportunity to earn our business.

There truly are acres of diamonds out there. You only need to take a moment to look.

Bill Guertin, Chief Enthusiasm Officer of The 800-Pound Gorilla, works with companies of all sizes to improve their sales, marketing, service skills, and profitability.