

Local Business Owners Attend Presentation to "Become a Destination"

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Local small business owners recently gathered for a presentation on "Becoming a Destination" in downtown Alton.

The organizations [Main Street America](#), [Illinois Main Street](#) and [Alton Main Street](#) sponsored the event. They invited Jon Schallert, the president of The Schallert Group, Inc., to speak about how to make a business a regional "must-see."

"I like talking to communities because you get a whole interesting mix of business owners from all over the place," Schallert said to the ten owners who attended the presentation.

Schallert has developed a 14-step process for becoming a “destination business.” He explained that a destination business is unique and not dependent on location. In fact, a true destination business will bring in people from outside the business’s traditional market.

This is partly why destination businesses are so beneficial to communities. They also garner media attention and word-of-mouth publicity, which encourages economic growth in towns like Alton.

Over the past 25 years, Schallert has interviewed over 10,000 independent business owners. He shared some of the strategies used by these businesses during his Alton presentation. Many of these owners created successful destinations by adapting what they already had, and they learned to market their businesses in a way that doesn’t sound like marketing.

For example, one fifth-generation rice farmer realized that he could use his farming equipment to plant wildflowers instead. He began charging people to visit the wildflower fields, and his wife started a gift shop to sell seeds, and soon the business became a well-known farm and winery in Texas called [Wildseed Farms](#).

“ a business that’s so compellingly unique, consumers say, ‘I have to go to that place!’” Schallert explained. “ a business that’s so compellingly unique, consumers say, ‘I have to buy from that place!’”