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Report: Small Business Divided on 'Occupy' Protests

By Nathan Denny on Nov 10, 2011

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The original idea behind the Occupy Wall Street movement -- a series of protests that's snowballed to pretty much every major U.S. city, and even some international ones -- was to send a message to big business and big banks that "the 99 percent" aren't gonna take it anymore.

Yet, report after report has indicated that, if anyone's actually suffering because of the protests, it's the small businesses in their immediate vicinity, which have had to deal with blocked sidewalks, intimidated customers, off-putting police presences, and other

detriments to your typical, everyday commercial enterprise.

"The impact of the urban encampment has been very negative," says Paul Junge of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, where the protests have been infamously heated.

"We are aware of dozens of small businesses in and around Frank Ogawa Plaza where the tents are, reporting 40 percent to 50 percent losses in the past three or four weeks, including clothing stores, coffee shops, and conference spaces," Junge told UPI.

Sentiment is similar in Portland, Oregon, where the city's Small Business Advisory Council has actually voted "to support an end to Occupy Portland's encampment of two downtown parks." That means the council will draft a letter to the Portland City Council asking the city to take action against the protesters.

"Enough's enough," council chairman Andy Frazier told the *Portland Oregonian*. "It's time to close this down."

But here's the interesting part: These seem to be somewhat isolated examples. All in all, about half of U.S. small businesses claim to actually *support* the Occupy movement, despite the problems being caused.

"According to a recent survey of more than 200 U.S. small businesses to see what they thought about Occupy Wall Street and its impact on small businesses, VerticalResponse found that U.S. small businesses are nearly evenly split on the issue," reports CNBC. "Forty-nine percent say they support OWS, while 46.6 percent say they don't, and 4.2 percent say they're not sure."

What do you think? Have these protests negatively impacted your business, or those of your peers? Sound off in the comments and let your Vistage Connect peers know your thoughts on what the Occupy movement means for small business in the U.S.

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Scott Axelrod Nov 10, 2011 9:32 PM

I wish we'd see the movement going after BIG business. I'm one of those people that believes small business owners are part of the 99%. I have a relative that put his home on the line to keep his business going. He didn't want to lay anyone off or close the business. These are not the people you want to hurt.