



Getting Your New Year's Resolutions to Stick

A Guide to Building Systems to Achieve your Business Growth Goals

Summary: You can achieve the company growth results you desire by setting up a marketing and sales support system. This article and checklist will help make your New Year's resolutions a reality.

The end of year holiday break gives us the time and space to reflect on the past year and project into the new one. By now you may have your list of New Year's resolutions, both personal and business. You are ready to tackle the challenges of 2009 with determination.

But unfortunately, studies show what you probably have experienced for yourself – most New Year promises don't stick. In fact a recent survey by [FranklinCovey](#) found that more than 75 percent of respondents will break their New Year's resolutions within 3 months and almost one-third will break them by the end of January.

Why? Because we often create goals for our business -- and then stop. We hope for significant sales gains and then continue with "business as usual". We expect different results but don't change our "system" for leveraging our time, staff and money.

These following eight simple steps will help you put the systems or "habits" in place to support your business growth goals. ([The associated one page checklist](#) will ensure that these items get on your 2009 calendar.)

1. Act now.

Studies show that doing (versus passive list writing) will make you more likely to achieve your goals. Commit to doing the following steps now - before you get overloaded with your usual client and business commitments.

Over the next month schedule a one-hour sales and marketing planning meeting. Invite all staff and any other advisors or consultants that "touch customers" and who can contribute to your company's growth. ([The next edition of the RoadMap Marketing Toolkit](#) will provide the details for organizing this meeting and generating a tactical, efficient marketing and sales plan for your business. The remaining action items listed here will provide the "pre-work" needed to make this planning meeting efficient and effective.)

2. Set SMART goals.

"A goal is a dream with a deadline."



To ensure your goals are more than a dream, make them SMART:

- Specific (*a number*),
- Measurable (*that you can easily measure*),
- Achievable (*based on past performance and market realities*),
- Responsible (*with one person assigned*) and
- Time bound (*with a deadline*).

First state concretely your sales goals for 2009. Your starting point should be your 2008 sales numbers organized by quarter, by product or service line, and by main customer group. Your 2009 sales numbers should build on these facts. If the future feels too unpredictable, only set numbers for the first one or two quarters of 2009.

List your assumptions in deriving these sales goals:

- Where do you think you can grow (or avoid erosion) with your current product/service offering and current customer base?
- How do you think the current economic picture will affect sales?
- Are you planning on launching any new or incremental products or services?
- Are you planning on reaching out to new customer groups?
- Any possible new partnerships or distribution channels?

Set your sales projections at three levels: 1) moderate, 2) stretch (best case) and 3) survival (worst case) with milestones by quarter so you can readjust.

List additional goals that you may have for your business (such as hiring a new sales person, launching a new product line, using a new distribution channel). Focus on the significant few - not the insignificant many. Prioritize your goals list to those few that will truly make a difference. This will make it easier to communicate and stay on track. Use the SMART guide above as a check.

3. Resolve to set aside resources.

Your most important resource is your time as the CEO. A recent study conducted by [SunTrust Bank](#) extracted the best practices of successful small businesses (those with growth at greater than 20% per year). In these



companies, the CEO dedicated at least 20% of his or her time to growth activities.

So, your best New Year action is to block out either one-day per week or two hours per day on your calendar to sales and marketing activities.



4. Cultivate “Growth Habits”.

Use your calendar and “action item” system to foster new habits that will keep your time and focus on important growth activities.

Use your calendar system to schedule the following growth activities for yourself and key people:

- Consistent, weekly blocks of time for marketing and sales. These “appointments” will be generic for now with the detailed action items decided later in your Marketing and Sales Planning meeting.
- Weekly 30-minute sales reviews on key prospects.
- Monthly one-hour reviews of results versus goals.

Use your action item system, be it a hand-written note or a formal project management system, to keep the following important lists:

- List of SMART goals.
- List of “hot” prospects. These are the few important potential clients that will significantly grow your business. Post this list in a visible, accessible place. Next to each key prospect, keep a record of next actions needed to further the sale.

5. Generate meaningful metrics.

Nothing is more motivating than seeing real progress toward your goal. But you cannot see that progress without having metrics in place. Sales are an obvious metric but this measure is usually too late in the sales cycle for adjustment. Keep it simple and commit to setting up a reporting system for a few meaningful metrics that you will track at least monthly. These metrics should act as indicators along your sales funnel so you have time to adjust or respond to real changes in customer demand. The following are examples of the most vital business measures:

- Inquiries/General Awareness: Website visits, Store Visits, Phone Inquiries, media placements
- Prospects (require an action from a potential customer): Responses to Promotions or Offers, Newsletter sign-up, RSS feed sign-ups on blog
- Sales Conversions: Sales by product or service and by target market, % of contract wins



- Customer Base: Customer Retention, Number of new versus existing customers



6. Get Resolution Partner(s)

Fitness guides and self-help books often speak of a “resolution partner”, or someone with whom you need to report progress toward your goal. Schedule quarterly meetings (or better monthly) with outside advisors or other CEOs to report on your progress. The metrics above will make it easy to discuss achievements and needed adjustments to your plan.

7. Create a Results-Oriented Culture.

Create a single point of accountability for any action item. With the “habits” above of dedicating time and organization to key goals, you are aligning your staff’s time with high priority tasks.

Within your organization, reward achievers publicly. This will act as a clear guide for developing your staff (or as justification for swapping out underperformers).

8. Stay Informed and Inspired.

In addition to goals for your business, what capabilities will help you and your organization grow? Do you want to develop better selling skills? Create a better system for responding to customer inquiries? Schedule now the following actions to create your base for information and development:

- Read books, newsletters and blogs that will develop your capabilities and inspire you to new and creative marketing actions. ([Here is a list of our favorite sources for small business marketing and sales.](#))
- Join industry groups to stay informed and connected.
- Scan the Web as well as the blogosphere for information posted on you and your competitors. Use Google Alerts (or another tool) to get emails each time your name, your company name or your competitors are mentioned. This free tool will help you in thanking customers that are complimentary and monitoring competitor actions.

Create SMART goals for these development needs and commit time and resources to make these actions a reality.

A Final New Year Marketing Tip.

Don’t forget to capitalize on the New Year event with some marketing outreach. If your product helps save time, money, or address any other common New Year resolution, reach out to prospects (and the press) with this message.



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