

How to Make 2009 the Best Year EVER

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The New Year is a great time to re-evaluate and prioritize what you want to accomplish in the New Year, as well as reflect on the events that occurred in the year past. Typically, there are two times of year when I write about these things - the New Year and in September when our academic clock starts ticking again and we're looking forward to that back-to-school, back-to-work connection. Here are seven recommendations that can get you through the toughest (and the greatest) of times today and in the future:

1. Remain open to receive opportunities as they present themselves.

Remember the Chinese character for Crisis is comprised of two characters: one that represents danger, the other opportunity. It's challenging to see where the opportunities lie when in the midst of a danger zone, however, that is when they are most likely to appear. Be grateful when these opportunities present themselves and be ready to pounce on them - they have come to you for a reason.

2. Remain focused on your outcomes and those of your clients. We are all in the business of selling outcomes and results for others - period. When you focus on what's best for your customer and meeting their needs to resolve their problems, you form a meaningful connection and sales become far easier. Identify the pain points of your prospects and customers and deliver solutions and results they are looking for.

3. Get out there and network. Business building is about connection and relationships. This is especially true for long-term and loyal clients. Getting out there and networking with your prospects and clients is an excellent way to continue the connection and build upon your relationships. In 1990 I worked with a commercial real estate firm and while the economy was sinking in New England, they hosted monthly breakfast meetings at a high-end downtown hotel to provide information to their clientele. By continuing to connect and offer this "free" advice to their client base, they earned lifetime loyalty.

4. Keep things in perspective and show your gratitude for all you do have. This too, shall pass. Be prepared when it does by understanding the important things and tasks to focus on. Remember, this country has survived more trying times and will rise again. Expressing your thanks and gratitude to others is essential in keeping your own spirits high, while also lifting others up. No one wants to be around a chronic complainer. You make yourself more

attractive to others by focusing on the positive and expressing an attitude of gratitude.

5. Give to others. There's perhaps no better way to get yourself out of a funk, than by reaching out and helping an organization, community - even a client, who's in need of your expertise, time and resources. Memories are created through meaningful experiences with others. When you give some of yourself away with sincerity and without an expectation of what will come back to you - something always does in bigger and better ways. In the New Year, with new beginning, it's the ideal season to practice giving.

6. Engage the media. Spend some time cultivating relationships with the press in your local market, industry trade publications and even the national media. Offer to take an editor to lunch and have a few compelling story ideas to present them. Ideally, they should be about other businesses you think their readers or viewers would like to hear about. You'll position yourself as a resource to them and in my experience as a publicist in a past life - they're more likely to write about you and your business. Treat the media as you would a prospect or client and you'll form long-lasting relationships with them.

7. Research new technology and put it to use. From what I've been hearing about lately at all of the business development workshops I've been attending, social media is where it's at. Focus on learning more about Facebook and Twitter, and get on line and expand your network. It's amazing who you can connect with and who wants to follow you in this new media. Remember, the web is forever, so be thoughtful about what you say and do in this venue.

8. Get back to basics in your business. I love e-mail marketing and e-mail in general. Heck there are some days I never speak to anyone, and I hate to admit it, but I like it like that. However, there is no replacement for a face-to-face lunch with your client, attending an event that allows you to connect with others in a deeper and more meaningful way. Let's not forget the marketing tactics that brought you results earlier in your business. Tactics like sending out hand-written notes, celebrating unconventional holidays (my favorite is Chinese New Years), a direct mail campaign could garner you greater results because they are not as commonly used, but stand out when you do implement these tactics.

9. Create a plan and implement it. There's a saying - "have map, will travel." Why? You know where your final destination is and how to most effectively get there. Why wouldn't you do this in terms of planning for your own business and personal life? I urge you to try it. Sit down with a colleague or trusted friend and get your calendar out for 2009. Begin with the end in mind and work backwards from that date, assigning tasks to the most qualified person

and implement the plan. Create systems in your business that is replicate-able for you to use over and over again. There's no sense in re-creating the wheel.

In times of change - especially when economics are involved - greater challenges are posed and needed to be overcome. One of the most wonderful things that happen during these times is that people seem to be more open to hearing one another out. We are more able to listen to another's perspective and perhaps collaborate in ways that we might not have previously. This allows for new products and services to be created, more distinguishable marketing practices to occur and the more innovative design and technology to be born.

Like many of us, I live in a world with big egos - having most of your close friends and colleagues as professional speakers, published authors and high-paying consultants and coaches, provides an interesting perspective. As a society we have an insatiable appetite with the lives of celebrities, politicians and business leaders.

However, in my experience one of the most attractive qualities in a person is the ability to be humble - at all times. Humility combined with other qualities aforementioned is a winning formula today and tomorrow.

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