

7 Tips to Ensure Your Business Goals Succeed in 2016

It's a New Year...but the clock's already ticking.

It's January 2; have you closed that first Big Deal of 2016 yet? Okay, we're yanking your chain just a little bit here. But between that Christmas or Hanukkah dinner and New Year's Eve revelries, we hope you gave some thought to your business goals for the coming twelve months. If not, time's a-wastin'. So let us help you get started, or perhaps *refine* your approach to those goals you've set so that you are more likely to achieve your objectives.

First of all, let's dispel a myth that too many of us fall back on when we're formulating business plans in January or at the start of a fiscal year. ***You don't have an entire year to achieve this year's goals.*** It's a documented fact that even dedicated sales personnel will be spending one-third to one-half of their time in any given year on non-sales-oriented activities. By the time tasks such as accounts management and other professional demands are factored in, you may have as little as 40% of that seemingly long year to achieve your goals and objectives. For a more tangible perspective—look at it this way: What if you only had 'til the second week of May to attain the cumulative results you're planning to celebrate in December? Daunting, isn't it? So here are some tips to maximize your efforts and time management skills.

1. Document Your Goals

Despite all the great technological advancements in communications of the 20th and 21st Centuries, nothing has supplanted the simple, effective power of a list. Whether scribbled on a notepad or composed on your iPad, committing your goals—actions, achievements and dates—to a list that you will refer to frequently is the best way to stay focused and keep your eyes on the prize of a dedicated strategy or action plan. Will these benchmarks fluctuate at times? Certainly. But if you adhere to a basic framework of predetermined goals and an ambitious, but manageable timeline, a list may prove to be your most valuable tool in realizing your annual objectives.

2. Determine Who Your Potential Customers Are...and Why

Nothing will make your sales efforts more productive than effectively identifying the leads you pursue. Pursuing ten focused leads will produce more successful results than a hundred random ones. Learn all that you can about the prospects you approach *before* you approach them and determine why they will benefit from the products or services you provide. At first blush, it's more important that you know more about what your customer needs than they know about your goods and wares.

3. Earn a Seat at the Table

It's essential that you not only get in your potential customer's front door, but in the decision-maker's office, right? Sometimes—particularly if the enterprise is big enough—there are multiple individuals who can influence a big decision or purchase. Identify at

least three, if possible, and provide them each with valuable information that not only addresses the needs of the overall company, but those that fall strictly under their purview. When you've got two or three people seated at the executive table who are willing to endorse you, you will have paved the way for bigger things.

4. Stop Selling. Start Helping.

As we have extolled many times –and most leading professionals agree—traditional sales methods are defunct. The hard sell is dead and buried. Focus your efforts are becoming your prospects' trusted, *expert* adviser. By providing valuable resources, proven information and good counsel, gratis, to your targeted customers, a bond of familiarity and reliance will be forged. Make your website an invaluable, authoritative one. Create frequent, informative –even entertaining- blog posts that your prospects will welcome. And be available as a go-to consultant as needed. When your customer is ready to make a purchase, they will turn only to you.

5. Allocate Your Efforts Effectively

“Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other is gold.” Whether you are familiar with that old Broadway song or not, surely the concept is not lost on you. And it applies just as profoundly in business as it does in friendship. While it's vital to your enterprise to continue seeking out new customers, make sure you continue to service and treat your legacy clients as well as you did when you were first seeking *them* out. Customer loyalty is more ephemeral than ever today, and thusly, that much more important.

6. Measure, Manage & Track

It's vital that you determine which of your efforts are effective and which are not. Even in the face of some undeniable success, if you're not replicating the efforts that work, or worse, duplicating those that don't, you're leaving way too much to chance. And if you don't have the tools for measuring some of the more intangible aspects of your sales & marketing initiatives, don't hesitate to ask your clients which of them resonated with them. You might be able to retire that six-panel color brochure from 1997!

7. Win-Win

Remember, long-term enduring success doesn't land on your desk with that new customer contract. It arrives when you've built a portfolio of clients' that, in some way or another, all truly feel that you have contributed invaluablely to their growth and success.

Happy New Year! And best wishes on achieving your goals in 2016.